EXHUMATION AND HISTORICISM: WALTER PATER AND HISTORICAL PRACTICE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

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This study examines the place of Walter Pater as a historical thinker in the nineteenth century by 1) situating him in the context of nineteenth-century historicism by reading him against such figures as Jacob Burckhardt, Jules Michelet, and Thomas Carlyle, as well as others; 2) demonstrating the extent to which Pater raises and struggles with the questions and complexities of historical inquiry; 3) showing how these questions manifest themselves in specific areas of Pater's thought, such as in his attention to the related discourses of biography and autobiography; and 4) discussing these questions and solutions in terms of <u>this</u> century's latest response to the historical question in the "new historicism."

This study is motivated by the assumption that nineteenth-century historicism takes as one of its most productive models the act of bodily exhumation. In sum, the physical act of unearthing and recovery is strikingly recapitulated and reshaped in the historical thought of the nineteenth century. Such a model and how it is manifested in historical discourse is a chief concern of this study, and is particularly germane to similar uses of the body in current critical theory and historical practice.

INTRODUCTION

WALTER PATER AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORICISM

Although this study's title is not the first to yoke the word "historicism" and the name of Walter Pater, the notion may still bewilder some. After all, the unease with calling Pater's thought "historical" has been a commonplace of Pater criticism since the first reviews of Studies in the History of the Renaissance in 1873.[1] While Pater takes his subject matter from epochs other than his own, his methodology is often seen as ahistorical, his approach irretrievably subjectivist. Recent years have seen less of a reluctance in including Pater in discussions of "historicism," but this willingness has been accompanied by another kind of resistance. Although Peter Allan Dale says, using Croce's phrase, that "[o]nly in Pater does one find the adoption of a complete historicism" (8), he compares Pater to Bradley, Croce, and Dilthey, only to conclude, "I am not, of course, arguing that Pater's approach to the problem of historical knowledge ranks with any of these in philosophical importance" (191). More recently, Carolyn Williams speaks of an "aesthetic historicism," wherein,

"unlike most of his contemporaries," Pater "knows that the reception of the historical record is itself a creation, an aesthetic act" (86). Her study finds a Pater uncomfortable with the modes of objectivity assumed in nineteenth-century historical inquiry, and positions himself against it. Since it is also a contention of my study that Pater, in a sense, rewrites historicism, and since the term itself is constantly being rewritten in current cultural studies, perhaps a brief history of its use is in order.

What is "Historicism"?

Most accounts trace the origin of "historicism" to the German *historismus*. Directly translated as "historism," *historismus* originates conceptually toward the end of the eighteenth century, but the term itself does not come into currency until the twentieth century, when Friedrich Meinecke, who finds it used first in an 1879 book on Vico, develops it into a comprehensive methodology in his 1936 *Die Enstehung des Historismus*.[2]

Historismus as a "philosophy of history," however, had been around at least since Herder, for whom in 1774 the historical method meant the "conception that every age must be viewed in terms of its own values; that there is no progress or decline in history, but only value-filled intensity" (Iggers 30). But it is Leopold von Ranke's famous preface to his History of the Latin and Teutonic

Nations in 1824 that gives historismus its most salient terminology:

> History has had assigned to it the office of judging the past and of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such offices the present work does not presume: it seeks only to show what actually happened [*wie es eigentlich gewesen*]. (World 58).

Within this formulation, historicism becomes a methodology as well as a philosophy of history.

The genealogy of the term remains relatively dormant until Meinecke takes it up again in 1936. Historicism is for him "one of the greatest intellectual revolutions that has ever taken place in Western thought" (liv). In Meinecke's hands historicism broadens, and becomes

> not merely . . . an approach to history, but . . . a comprehensive philosophy of life which views all social reality as a historical stream where no two instances are comparable and which assumes that value standards and logical categories, too, are totally immersed in the stream of history. (Iggers 30)

This broadening of *historismus*, however, made the term itself all the more unstable. Whereas Ranke's *historismus* attempted, however ill-conceivedly, to remove itself from historical judgments by a concentration on the particulars, Meinecke plunges Ranke's method itself into the "stream of history."

After Meinecke's comprehensive formulation, "historicism" is taken up and rewritten by nearly all who come in contact with it, a process that, even today,

continues unabated. For Benedetto Croce in History as the Story of Liberty (1941), *storicismo*, or historicism

> is a logical principle; it is, in fact, the very category of logic; it is logicality in its full acceptation, the logicality of the concrete universal, and therefore . . . alive and always more or less at work in the human mind. It was notably alive and at work in the age of historicism. But it has never altogether absent in any man or in any age. . . . (78)

As Croce himself confesses, this is a peculiarly "anti-historic" formulation. For him, historicism is separate from the discourse or "age" of historicism, almost as if the concept itself were waiting to be found. On the other hand, R.G. Collingwood, whose landmark work The Idea of History was not written in time to consider the development of Croce's thought in History as the Story of Liberty, avoids using the term altogether. He opts instead for "historiography," as if to underscore the practice as opposed to the theory or philosophy of history. Collingwood argues against the "historicity of all things," and maintains that "all knowledge" does not "resolve . . . into historical knowledge" (210).

Perhaps in response to Collingwood, Hans Meyerhoff, in his 1954 The Philosophy of History in Our Time, "re-historicizes" historicism by describing it as "a by-product of the romantic revolt against enlightenment and rationalism" (9). His description of the methodology of historicism draws upon Meinecke, and also betrays a Rankian faith in historical reconstruction:

> The basic thesis of historicism is quite simple: The subject matter of history is human life in its totality and multiplicity. It is the historian's aim to portray the bewildering, unsystematic variety of historical forms--people, nations, cultures, customs, institutions, songs, myths, and thoughts--in their unique, living expressions and in the process of continuous growth and transformation. (10)

It is within this climate of linguistic flux that Karl Popper, in 1957, discusses what he sees as The Poverty of Historicism. Although he vainly hopes that "nobody . . . will be tempted to question whether any of the arguments here discussed really or properly or essentially belong to historicism, or what the word historicism really or properly or essentially means" (4), he nonetheless offers a definition of this critical word:

> I mean by 'historicism' an approach to the social sciences which assumes that *historical prediction* is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or 'patterns,' the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history. (3)[3]

Robert D'Amico rightly calls Popper's definition of historicism "idiosyncratic." Within the context of this particularly clogged period in the evolution of the term, however, it would be difficult to find a definition that was not. Indeed, it is this indeterminacy that moves Hayden White, in the preface to his 1959 translation of Carl Antoni's *Dallo Storicismo alla Sociologia* to observe that a "recent article . . . lists no less than five different, and often opposed, uses of the term [historicism]. We thought

it wise, therefore, to eliminate the word from the title of the English edition" (From History to Sociology x).[4]

We should note that, despite all this linguistic transformation, the term evolves very little, and none of these definitions becomes historically definitive. Ranke's *historismus* may be taken up by Meinecke but dismissed by Walter Benjamin as the tool of "victors" and "rulers." And even as late as 1964, Erich Kahler could offer an evidently Hegelian historical practice as a serviceable definition of what he calls "historism":

> By *historism* we may understand the tendency to see and explain everything historically; to derive . . . classificatory terms and distinctions from evolutional stages; systematic and historical orders coincide. The very experience of evolution brought this about, the God- or Nature-given constancies being swept away in the process. (171)

This Kahler distinguishes from "historicism," which is the not-so-efficacious Rankian corrective to the Hegelian method:

> The evaporation of human content in the idea of Progress was intrinsically connected with a hypertrophical *degeneration of historism into historicism*, which set in at the end of the nineteenth century. In the pursuit of methodological research, an overabundance of data was brought to light which of necessity resulted in an ever increasing specialization. (175)

U.C. Knoepflmacher's 1963 article "Historicism as Fiction: Motion and Rest in the Stories of Walter Pater" slips between Hayden White's avoidance of the term and Kahler's attempt to divide and clarify. In Pater's case,

Knoepflmacher argues, historicism is hardly distinguishable from fiction, and his "imaginary" portraits "bear a distinct resemblance" to his interpretation of actual figures. In both of these modes, Pater's historicism, according to Knoepflmacher, becomes an attempt to "isolat[e] the impressions of these past figures, to rescue their 'sensations and ideas' from the inexorable flux of historical circumstances . . . " (140). Granting Pater the ability to detect the "flux" of history, Knoepflmacher nonetheless sees in Pater the quixotic desire to "freeze" what cannot be frozen. Finally, then, one is unclear as to what kind of "historicism" Knoepflmacher finds in Pater's work. To avoid this obscurity and to see how Pater contributes to the discourse of nineteenth-century historicism, it is necessary to survey briefly the context of that discourse.

Nineteenth-Century Historicism

Although this study is confined to nineteenth-century historicism, it would be problematic not to discuss Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), whose 1725 *Principii d'una scienza nuova* is commonly seen to be the "beginning of cultural history" (Berlin xix). According to Hayden White, Vico's achievement was his recognition of "the need for metahistorical principles by which the general truths [can be] derived from contemplation of past facts in their individuality and completeness" (51). Although Vico's "new

science" is not the first instance of the rhetorical procedures that comprise modern historicism, virtually all subsequent historiography follows from Vico. In Vico, for example, we find the rudiments of subjectivist inquiry in his *verum et factum convertuntur*: What we can observe or perceive is a limited form of knowledge, and is distinct from the immediate and complete knowledge of what we have actually made. This "God's eye view" bestows the creator with the unique ability to "make history," whereas the mere observer is constructed by and within history.

Perhaps the most salient concept that we get from Vico is the idea that culture--art, human nature--must be understood historically:

> . . . there is a pervasive pattern which characterizes all the activities of any given society: a common style reflected in the thought, the arts, the social institutions, the language, the ways of life and action, of an entire society. This idea is tantamount to the concept of a culture; . . . true understanding of human history cannot be achieved without the recognition of a succession of the phases of the culture of a given society or people. (Berlin xvii)

This "contextual" reading of history is taken up by nearly every historical thinker after Vico, especially Hegel, who was the source for Pater's notion of "modern" scholarship, in which "every intellectual product must be judged from the point of view of the people and the age in which it was produced" (R 25). This is a maxim that Pater would maintain all his scholarly life, claiming much later in Plato and

Platonism (1893) that the historical approach was the only "really critical study of [Plato]" (11).

We also find in Pater an interesting reading of Vico's *verum et factum convertuntur*. As a reader, Pater not only realizes that knowledge from observation is subject to mediation, but exploits that realization by converting sensory, or subjective, knowledge into a form of creation. His reluctance, in his Preface to The Renaissance, to follow in the long line of who have tried to "define beauty in the abstract" is a attempt to divorce himself from the idea that one could see any "object as in itself it really is." Instead of reading other objects, within whose alien signification the observer will find himself lost, why not elevate the reading of that object to a form of creation of which one can have immediate knowledge? Assuredly, Vico's conception, as well as Pater's twist on it, is based on the assumption that the author has complete control over what he produces, including the received language that he employs. However, Pater's "revision" of Vico, conscious or not, is crucial to his approach to historical understanding. Throughout this study, I will refer to Pater "reading" texts or manipulating them so that the act reading of is emphasized. It is this emphasis on reading, sketched out by this "conversion" of Vico, that defines the Paterian approach to historical inquiry, and it is this model that problematizes Pater's inclusion in what Hayden White, in

Metahistory, calls "The Classics of Nineteenth-Century Historiography." I would also venture that it is this impulse in Pater to foreground signification that now makes him an important, if historically neglected, consideration in postmodern literary theory.[5]

The hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), to whom Pater owes a profound allegiance, reformulates Vico's formulation of the author. Schleiermacher's assumption, that "it is possible to understand an author better than he understands himself" (Gardiner 223), would at first seem to contradict the Vician concept of authorial knowledge that Pater appropriated. As we will see in Pater's reading of Leonardo da Vinci, however, the author or the artist becomes constructed from the texts that represent him, and in our readings we create an artist that only we know intimately. For Pater, there is no biographical figure that transcends its representation. The historical specificities of style ensure that any figure's "portrait" will change with each representation. Pater thus converts Vasari's famous portrait of Leonardo into his own. In this way, Pater turns Schleiermacher on his head. If, for Schleiermacher, "the historical text is not addressed directly to the present interpreter, but to an original audience," and the "interpreter is to understand that original communication in terms of its historical context" (Hermeneutics 13), to Pater such an emphasis on the

"original" audience is irrelevant. In Schleiermacher, the historical text is fixed and stable and is capable of being understood in that form. For Pater, this kind of contextual reading, though interesting, is finally impossible.

Also in Schleiermacher, we find one of the earliest formulations of the subjective approach to history, a concept that arguably forms the basis of Pater's thought:

> The act of creation is expression, self-manifestation, a definition and externalization of feeling. Art is approached purely from the side of the artist, through his mental process. The work of art as an object and the effect on its object is minimized, or rather considered as a mere consequence of the crucial act of free expression. (Wellek, II: 304)

It would, however, be unwise to conflate this "self-culture" and Pater's faith, at least in The Renaissance, in the significance of subjective impressions. While his emphasis on the subjective often induces Pater to approach art "from the side of the artist," the importance and effect of the art object is hardly "minimized" in Pater. Indeed, the power of the work of art often expands beyond the artist's ability to control it, as in Pater's notorious reading of *La Gioconda*. He shows Leonardo da Vinci, at a historically specific moment, creating a painting that achieves a kind of historical transcendence which, like the artist's life as it is biographically represented, establishes its transcendence over a lineage of historically confined readings.

Defined in terms of the "subjective," of "expression," and of art that usurps the artist, the Paterian approach is

often seen as psychological or historically pre-psychological. Like two of his greatest influences--Hegel and Renan, whose languages allowed a single word (*Geist* and *l'esprit*, respectively) to represent both "mind" and "spirit"--Pater is indeed concerned with the function of the mind in history, as was his contemporary, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Dilthey extends the function of the subject in history by making history subordinate to the mind, as indicated in his Doctrine of the Understanding: "[A]ll physical expressions are expressions of mental events, or states, and the job of the Understanding is to link up any given expression with its appropriate mental event or state" (Gardiner 211-2). Dilthey accomplishes this by separating psychology from science:

> Thus genuine historical knowledge is an inward experience (*Erlebnis*) of its own object, whereas scientific knowledge is the attempt to understand (*begreifen*) phenomena presented to him as outward spectacles. . . . [T]he historian . . . [lives] in his object, or rather [makes] the object live in him . . . . (Collingwood 172)

More crucially, such knowledge expands the reader and inscribes him, albeit anachronistically, into the past:

> By simply reliving [the past], he is developing and enlarging his own personality, incorporating in his own experience the experience of others in the past; but whatever is so incorporated becomes part of the structure of his personality. (173)

It might be said that Pater made a career out of making the past a "structure of his personality." Such a statement, however, must take into consideration the

profound differences between Pater's and Dilthey's definitions of "personality," as well as the differences in how they see this personality figuring in history. Dilthey's "personality," for instance, is static and atemporal, which is to say, ahistorical. Regardless of his provision that the past has the ability to alter the personality, it does so unhistorically. We can, in other words, re-create history immediately in a mind that is always transcendent from history. Although the use of the past to develop the mind is a concept that Pater would endorse, his work argues that an immediate re-creation of the past is impossible--as the ill-fated attempts of his Duke Carl of Rosenmold attest. However, he does not see such "anachronistic" knowledge as totally without merit. Pater sees historical reading as an enterprise in which mediation must be foregrounded and manipulated, so that dispensing with a Rankian obsession with history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* becomes an act that creates historical possibilities. Indeed, much of his work is motivated by this act: the entire basis for "Denys L'Auxerrois" is its narrator's desire to create knowledge <u>through</u> mediation, not in spite of it. His reading of the tapestry at Auxerre allows historical possibilities that were never conceivable "when it actually happened."

In discussing this desire to re-create "reality," we should remember that Pater comes of age during the heyday of

Positivism, which Collingwood calls "philosophy acting in the service of natural science" (126). He notes that this "superficial notion" of natural science allowed the Positivists, most notably Auguste Comte (1798-1857), to frame a historiography which

> consisted of two things: first, ascertaining facts; secondly, framing laws. The facts were immediately ascertained by sensuous perception. The laws were framed through generalizing from these facts by induction. (127)

This "science," argues Maurice Mandelbaum, implicates a correlative rejection of metaphysics

> on the ground that the questions with which metaphysics is concerned presuppose a mistaken belief that we can discover principles of explanation or interpretation which are more ultimate than those which are directly derived from observation and from generalizations concerning observations. For positivists, any attempt to pass from the realm of 'phenomena' to a more ultimate reality is a hopeless and unjustifiable enterprise . . . . (10)

For Comte, this science reveals distinctive patterns in the historical fabric, where he

> distinguished between the period of full vigor of a society, and the period of its decadence; a distinction which was drawn in terms of when that society was a part of the march of civilization, and when it had become stationary. (66)

This "march of civilization," as Comte called it, "follows a *natural* and unavoidable course" (Comte 39; emphasis added). Like nature, history becomes organic and manifestly amoral, and all one can do is simply acquiesce to the point in the "march" within which one finds oneself--in Pater's case the decadent era.

Certainly, we can trace Pater, as well as his antecedents (Winckelmann, Baudelaire) and his descendants (Huysmans, Wilde), along these lines of vigor and decadence. For Baudelaire, nature is a poisonous force, a thing to be feared but never conquered, a producer of terrible beauty and *fleurs du mal*. In A rebours (1884), Huysmans's famous neurasthenic, Des Esseintes, blames his maladies on the increasing impotence of his genetic line. Indeed, as shown in the rise of the upper-class phenomena of neurasthenia and eugenics (a belief that our cultural "problems" were the result of a collective and "diluted" gene pool), positivism becomes a powerful cultural force itself during the time when Pater is making his reputation.

In one of the more famous passages from The Renaissance, Pater's description of decadence is vaguely reminscent of Comte's model of positivistic progress:

> The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence, as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascêsis*, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth. (xxiii)

The products of this organic model, we should note, are produced from its aftermath, and thus outside it. And while we can clearly trace the influence of such a model on Pater's thought, we should also note that, as with all "systems," Pater discards this one with the same expedience that he takes it up.

Although it is indeed difficult to attribute any single historical methodology to all of Pater's works, the effects of his reading of Hegel show up perhaps more conspicuously than others. Since I treat the influence of Hegel on Pater--particularly the Hegelian dialectic--more fully in Chapter One, I will not rehearse those details here. One of the more prominent Hegelian legacies in Pater, however, is the notion of the Age and how "needs of the age" always "override the claims of particular moral and political ideals, however sincerely held" (Gardiner 60). Such a system not only allows Pater to apply to powerful effect the rhetoric of reserved historical judgment, but also allows him to preserve the mystery, or in Paterian terms, the "curiosity" of history. The impossibility of perfect, ahistorical knowledge is crucial to Pater, who fully depends on, and would be nothing without, historical, cultural, and textual difference. The much-used Hegelian phrase, the "philosophy <u>of</u> history" thus becomes "philosophy <u>as</u> history." In both formulations, philosophy becomes historical, and thought that is advanced as "universal," or that claims to emerge *in vacuo*, is itself the product of a "determinate person in a determinate situation" (Collingwood 116). Pico della Mirandola, for example, who claims in the fifteenth century to be able to "defend nine hundred bold paradoxes, drawn from the most opposite sources, against all comers" (<u>R</u> 30), represents for Pater a "curiosity" who is

clearly produced by the fifteenth-century scholarly mind. Although this notion of subjective "curiosity" can often be an attempt to skirt historical difference, nonetheless it is historical difference that paradoxically allows such an attempt.

While Pater repeats, throughout his body of work, variations of what he calls the "historic method," and while all these variations take as their central tenet the issue of historical difference, there are several ways, as we will see in Chapters One and Five, that Pater attempts to manipulate, or even "collapse," this difference. Pater's disinterested or indifferent critic, for example, lessens the importance of difference by his ability to divide his distinct impression from the unintelligible mass of thought. As in the word's literal formulation, the critic is "indifferent"; his *absence* from all perspectives *aligns* him with all perspectives. This attempt to remove oneself from historical judgment, as in Burckhardt and Renan, makes Pater's historicism somewhat relativistic.

It is this relativism that separates Pater from his near contemporary Karl Marx (1818-1883), who also borrows liberally from Hegel. If the dialectical movement of history, in Hegel--a decidedly progressive one--tends to place faith in an inevitable, ideal "end" of history, Marx asserts the need for, and possibility of, acting within history to realize any true progress. Pater, without any

end in his sights, often seems to entrench himself in an inevitability that is more positivistic than Hegelian. The results of any action, political or otherwise, are always arbitrary in Pater; all "progress" is illusory, and can be undercut at any time. Duke Carl of Rosenmold's attempts to make "backwards" Germany more "progressively" Apollonian, for example, become increasingly ridiculous, culminating in his bizarre and arbitrary death. Similarly, any collective effort of the people is more frightening than hopeful, such as when the mob in "Denys l'Auxerrois," moved by some inexplicable Dionysian impulse, rises out of nowhere and dismantles Denys's body. Pater's distrust of the mob, and also of the "Great Man," the individual in whom Burckhardt and Carlyle put so much trust, drives him deeper into an implicit nihilism, one that is relieved only by reaffirming one's existence through the reading of art.

To say Pater's thought is completely apolitical, however, would be erroneous. If Pater, at least implicitly, rejects the prospect of a progressive, utopian historicism, there does remain in his work a historicism, and a politics. An example of Paterian historicism at work may make my point more clear. In the first chapter of <u>Plato and Platonism</u>, Pater "historicizes" Platonic philosophy by making it seem, at first glance, to be ahistorical, by refusing to "fix" it chronologically:

> [I]n the history of philosophy there are no absolute beginnings. Fix where we may the origin

> of this or that doctrine or idea, the doctrine of 'reminiscence,' for instance, or of 'the perpetual flux,' the theory of 'induction,' or the philosophic view of things generally, the specialist will still be able to find us some earlier anticipation of that doctrine, that mental tendency. (5)

Playing Plato's game by his own rules is not, Pater continues

> [t]he business of the young scholar . . . . [it] is not take his side in a controversy, or to adopt or refute Plato's opinions, to modify, or make apology for, what may seem erratic or impossible in him; still less, to furnish himself with arguments on behalf of some theory or conviction of his own. (10-11)

Finally, he concludes, reading Plato is not valuable because Plato managed to stumble on to the cultural equivalent of the Rosetta Stone, but because it is interesting

> to watch, for its dramatic interest, the spectacle of a powerful, of a sovereign intellect, translating itself, amid a complex group of conditions which can never in the nature of things occur again, at once pliant and resistant to them, into a great literary monument. (11)

By historicizing Plato, Pater de-universalizes him. A manifestly political act, this subversion of philosophy to history creates divisions (Foucault would later call them "ruptures") that problematize the prospect of any one *über*philosophy, or any explanation within which all others may be reconciled. From the Preface to <u>The Renaissance</u>, where he revises Arnold's notion of "the object as in itself it really is," to the end of <u>Plato and Platonism</u> twenty years later, we see Pater make similar efforts to "resist" reading texts on what are considered to be the author's own

terms. So although there is nothing of what we could call "progress" in Pater's thought, his resistance to textual authority figures him prominently into the politics of reading. That such resistance is in such short supply today testifies, perhaps, to the prescience of Pater's aprogressivism.

As in all Pater, this historicizing of Plato owes a great debt to his reading of Hegel. His emphasis, however, on a "complex group of conditions," as well as his emphasis on the "literary," may be more closely indebted to Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), whose *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* is perhaps best know for its historicizing maxim: "*la race, le milieu, le moment*." For Taine, there is no essential individual outside of culture. We can be "individuals," that is to say different, to be sure, but that difference, as the maxim clearly states, is constructed by racial heredity, cultural surroundings, and historical specificity. In Frank Lentricchia's words, Taine represents a

> rejection of Enlightenment philosophy and historiography which marks the origins of modern historicism: in other words, there is no human nature and therefore no subject which can be its free expression. (Ariel 88)

In Taine, the behaviors which others impute to an immutable and universal human nature become, like Pater's Plato, the province of history.

Characteristically, Pater both endorses and seems to reject this anti-essentialist notion of the individual. As

his reading of Plato suggests, Pater appreciates that any study of any individual must also be a study of culture. Furthermore, he realizes that all cultural artifacts require a form of historical reading, that is to say a reading not based on mere "intuition." That said, we cannot dismiss the times when Pater seems to depend on a notion of the essential individual, especially evident when we look at the example of the mob scene that mentioned above. Denys, the embodiment of the twin spirits of Dionysus, inadvertently wreaks havoc (as gods are wont to do) on the economy of the village. He goes into hiding and, thus disguised, visits the various village functions undetected. Finally, as if by magic, the villagers find him out:

> And it happened that a point of the haircloth scratched his lip deeply, with a long trickling of blood upon the chin. It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage, and suddenly revealed to them the truth. The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions. (IP 76)

The language of blood, of violence without source, undermines the cultural institutions that determine, and confine, behaviors (i.e. "evil passions"). Culture is as "pretended" here as the illusion of order or rationality. Once tapped, once that link has been established with the base instincts of the animals from which we were evolved, "men's evil passions" begin to feed upon each other, until the individual as a culturally-constructed entity is long forgotten.

If I have intentionally reduced this reading of the final scenes of "Denys L'Auxerrois" to make Pater seem like some Burkian essentialist, it is to show how such a reading, by itself, fails in explaining Pater. These "evil passions," for instance, actually do not spring from the beast beneath the human clothes, but from what Pater had established earlier in the portrait as the cultural tendencies of the town, albeit tendencies heavily informed by Greco-Roman mythology, as well as the Gothic supernatural. Denys, who Pater explicitly tells us is <u>not</u> human, besides bestowing an unprecedented era of fertility on the town, "had his contrast, his dark or antipathetic side; he was a double creature, of two natures, difficult or impossible to harmonise" (66). As I argue in Chapter One, Pater foregrounds this "impossibility" of reconciliation in order to present a historical and cultural problem that itself cannot be reduced to or reconciled with what is today commonly called "essentialism."

This notion of reconciliation is not only peculiar with Pater, but with many other nineteenth century figures, three of whom I discuss in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, and who identify themselves as concerned with the problems of historical knowledge. In order to "write" history, one must consider the question of how past action can be reconciled into the contemporary language that is its putative

representation. In the nineteenth century, Foucault says in The Order of Things,

> History . . . defines the birthplace of the empirical, that from which, prior to all established chronology, it derives its own being. It is no doubt because of this that History becomes so soon divided . . . into an empirical science of events and that radical mode of being that prescribes their destiny to all empirical beings, to those particular beings that we are. (219)

This emergence of history, while difficult to "fix" between the dates that Foucault provides ("the outer limits are the years 1775 and 1825"), does indeed establish itself as a discourse of "chronology" and "empiricities" in the nineteenth century. Any chronology, as I argue in Chapter One, not only includes questions of reconciliation, but also includes the methods by which its own rules are broken. Therefore, any discussion of chronology is also a discussion of "anachronism," and that any discussion of reconciliation is also a discussion of its own impossibility.

Given the empirical context of history in the nineteenth century, identifying this impossibility of access to past epochs creates a historical discourse that, indeed, has much at stake. Signified by the Carlylian jeremiads, the rise of positivism and Darwinism, as well as the much-publicized debates that followed, this "disconnectedness" itself becomes a field of knowledge for which nineteenth-century historicism must account. Transformed within this climate, as evidenced by Pater and the writers I discuss,

historiography becomes a matter of desperation, within which the very act of "looking back" itself is implicated.

Exhumation and Nineteenth-Century Historicism

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that exhumation becomes a prominent concern and practice during the nineteenth century. "Grave-robbing"--the physical form that exhumation often took--had become so widespread during the rise of medical science that England was forced to pass the Anatomy Act of 1832 in an attempt to stem the transaction of illicit corpses. The monster in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), for example, is assembled from the remains of such illegally exhumed corpses.[6] In France, Jules Michelet attended at least five, apparently legal, exhumations during his lifetime. Indeed, each of the featured writers in this study appropriates a kind of "historicism as exhumation"--the idea that history, like desiccated corpses, can be recaptured in its structural, albeit incomplete, immediacy--as a model for historical scholarship. Such a model, based as it is on the certainty of the physical in the dissolving face of the spiritual, often becomes an attempt to provide this connection, to prove that the past existed. Thus, exhumation is also an attempt to subvert chronology, to secure a method that will break the confinement of history and culture.

Perhaps this anxiety is provoked by the inevitable failure of such models to stanch this desire to subvert

chronology. Although Michelet later uses his wife's exhumation to generate historical strategies that he would find efficacious, and although Pater uses his unearthed bodies to force the same kinds of historical questions, the gaze into the pit, instead of providing that paradoxically physical connection to the spiritual, usually reveals only dust and bones--a disappointment that Pater attempts to check by garlanding his corpses with jewels. Even the potentially spectacular sight of worms and flesh that Michelet reports is rendered in a disturbingly business-like description. Although the viewer is confronted with the "evidence" of the passing of corporeal time, it means surprisingly little. At the exhumation of Louis XVI of France in 1814, for instance, he is described in contemporary documents as if he had never been dead, though his guillotined head sits between the legs of his torso:

> His Majesty was dressed in a waistcoat of white piqué, with breeches of grey silk, and stockings to match. His face was not discoloured, his features were unaltered, and his open eyes seemed to be still reproaching his judges for the unspeakable crime of which they had just been guilty. (quoted in Lenotre 270)

When the skulls of Johnathan Swift and "Stella" are supposedly uncovered in 1835, all that the resident "phrenologists" can conclude is that the male skull belonged to a man with "amativeness large and wit small" (Leslie 4). The skulls are then reburied. In "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," Pater uses "German bone-science" to show the inadequacies of

such empirical readings of past physical evidence. "Natural time" passes in the portrait, but imperceptibly. It is a time, a chronology, that is "beyond people's memories" (121). Pater's Renaissance is nothing if not a treatise on the failure of man to negotiate the chronology that stretches on either side of him. How one works within the confines of this failure, this "interval" as he calls it, is the stuff of Paterian historicism.

There is thus a mark of careful desperation to Paterian scholarship: a swelling fear that threatens to overwhelm the text, and which is eased by a displacement into a scholarship that Pater constructs as disinterested and safe. Instead of Pater's disinterest successfully masking this desperation, the places where it shows through are prominent precisely because its representation is so calculated and distracting. In this way, Pater's "style" is not merely the dazzling flourish on the ideas that others said better, but a rhetorical strategy designed to level the manifold anxieties that inform his work. It should be no surprise, then, that the "desperation" of the Conclusion to The Renaissance, Pater's first book, is first erased (by removing the Conclusion), then replaced by a style, in Marius the Epicurean and elsewhere, that hides such anxieties more carefully.

To some, the word "exhumation" may seem to be either an inappropriate or a self-evident term to use when discussing

Pater and history. Some may say that such a term attempts to "naturalize" history and thus repeats the same nineteenth-century positivist notions that we now gleefully dismiss, or worse, attempts to cash in on contemporary theory's current preoccupation with the body. Such models, they might argue, do more to obscure than draw out the intricacies of Pater's historical writings. On the other hand, others may say that, with his interest in ideal Greek culture and historical recovery and reconstruction, how could we not think of Pater in terms that recall the physical model of burial and exhumation?

As it turns out, these concerns are neither inappropriate to nor particularly obvious in Walter Pater's works--writings, most would agree, that are characterized by subtlety, elegance, and paradox, as well as, some would say, equivocation. Nonetheless, as early as his second published essay, "Winckelmann," Pater engages an exhumatory model that he would return to throughout the rest of his career:

> Filled as our culture is with the classical spirit, we can hardly imagine how deeply the human mind was moved, when, at the Renaissance, in the midst of the frozen world, the buried fire of ancient art rose up from under the soil. (146)

From a book whose title is <u>The Renaissance</u>, perhaps such phoenix-like metaphors are not extraordinary. I am intrigued, however, by Pater's use of the phrase "from under the soil," making as it does the classical "spirit"

inextricable from the materiality that both heralds and enacts it.

In this way, the exhumatory model is more than just another serviceable metaphor.[7] As we will see in the readings that follow, exhumation takes many forms, both discursive and material. The physical exhumation that begins "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," for example, performs as a model without which all the other exhumations would be unintelligible. That cultural exhumation of the "classical spirit" the Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*, that Pater describes in an afterword to the portrait depends for its power on the unearthing of the corpses of the Duke and his wife earlier. Such things as the Duke's empty coffin, the *Resurgam* upon that coffin, the Duke's donning of ancient garb, even Pater's own careful manipulations of exhumatory imagery, all recapitulate that initial, physical exhumation. Like other historical writers in the nineteenth century, Pater uses the physical model to stand in for a kind of visceral presence. His use of it, furthermore, betrays a desire to locate the self in history, to test the limits of chronology, and to reconcile temporality with the discursive models that seem to refute it.

Anachronism, Reconciliation, Collapse

In Chapter One, "Pater and the Problem of Historicism," I discuss some often used, but rarely examined, terms in discussions of historicism. Anachronism is commonly used to

refer to a historical artifact that has been misplaced temporally: the famous anachronistic clock that strikes in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, for example. Along these lines, this term has been extended to describe a faulty kind of historical scholarship, one that attempts to conflate historical periods. It is this use of the term that I employ and critique. Pater's extended enactment and discussion of anachronism in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," I argue, demonstrates a sophisticated and subversive approach to historical scholarship. In this Imaginary Portrait, Pater takes the contextualist approach of the modern Hegelian scholar and the Enlightenment desire for an Apollian revival and plays these two sides against each other. The result is a figure, Duke Carl, who emerges as both pathetic and admirable for the anachronistic manipulations that he performs to affect this revival. In exposing the Duke, he also reveals questions that problematize historical representation, including his own.

Since any anachronism is an attempt to conflate separate historical artifacts, it follows that issues of reconciliation would also be crucial questions in historical scholarship. In another Imaginary Portrait, "Denys l'Auxerrois," Pater demonstrates the problems with traditional notions of reconciliation. The obvious reconciliation--Denys's productive side with his destructive one--is redoubled in the portrait by a more consequential

reconciliation: the portrait is narrated by a man who pieces the legend of Denys together from bits of tapestry and stained glass, and who must reconcile the legend with the representation that he has created. The portrait demonstrates that notions of reconciliation must be extended to include the entire question of reconciliation, which in turn includes reconciliations where force is used as well as paradoxical ones where nothing merges or is reconciled.

One of the more profound reconciliations that take place in Paterian scholarship is the one between historical and aesthetic concerns. Indeed, one might describe the action between history and aesthetics in Pater's works as that of a "collapse," where carefully historicized concerns are abrogated by an aesthetic that seems to position itself in direct opposition to these concerns. As is the case with all these terms, this collapse is neither simple nor final. Instead, history's collapse into the aesthetic is, for Pater, but one decisive and powerful side of an oscillation. What Carolyn Williams describes as Pater's "aesthetic historicism" is, in fact, this oscillation, this constant checking of one discourse by the other. In this way, aesthetic historicism is perhaps a misnomer, since this dialectic between history and aesthetics does not produce a clearly definable third term. As we shall see in the section on reconciliation, there are some mergers that cannot be sustained.

Burckhardt, Michelet, and Carlyle

These three names are often mentioned in relation to Pater.[8] These relationships, however, have never been sufficiently discussed *as relationships*. Regardless of whether or not Pater read or knew these figures of historicism (he did), everything that he wrote, wittingly or unwittingly, was done within the context of their ideas and scholarship. The more apparent ways in which these figures intersect may be seen in the admirable scholarship of Donald Hill and Billie Inman. My interest, however, is with the less evident ways in which Pater plays his concerns off and against those of Burckhardt, Michelet, and Carlyle.

For example, to what extent Carlyle's notion of the Hero relates to Pater's Individual and Burckhardt's Great Man or Michelet's notion of The People is significant. This interest intensifies under the gradual realization that these ideas are hardly self-contained and that they are all the results of a complex intellectual exchange that both creates and erases boundaries between ideas and writers. Perhaps it is because Pater, with his encyclopedic knowledge and indiscriminate borrowing, shows the marks of this exchange so readily that he has become so interesting in recent years.

This new-found interest in Pater may also have much to with the discovery of a Pater who betrays much more sophistication than the minor late-Victorian essayist of the

anthologies. This sophistication, I would argue, has everything to do with how he actively manipulates the texts, authors, artists, etc., that he reads. As the early J. Hillis Miller and Wolfgang Iser discovered, reading is dynamic in Pater. As we shall see in my discussion of the "Leonardo" essay in Chapter Six, what he reads is changed with how he reads. In this light, what happens between Pater's, Michelet's, and Burckhardt's Renaissance is an important consideration in the discussion of the art of historical representation. When Pater becomes dissatisfied with these more traditional models and offers new models of his own in the Imaginary Portraits and in his essays, this study argues, is a more crucial, if neglected, consideration.

Notes

1. I am referring to Mrs. Pattison's oft-quoted review of Studies in the History of the Renaissance in the Westminster Review, where she says that "[t]he title is misleading. The historical element is precisely that which is wanting, and its absence makes the weak place of the whole book" (639).

For citation of Pater's works, abbreviations are as follows:

A	Appreciations
GL	Gaston de Latour
GS	Greek Studies
IP	Imaginary Portraits
ME	Marius the Epicurean
MS	Miscellaneous Studies
PP	Plato and Platonism
R	The Renaissance

2. This work has been translated as Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook. Trans. J.E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

3. An indispensable discussion of Popper and historicism is D'Amico's Historicism and Knowledge, where he argues that "Popper's refutation of historicism is actually a refutation of realism in the social sciences and specifically a realist account of historical explanation" (20).

4. The article White refers to is Lee and Beck's "The Meaning of 'Historicism'."

5. Literary theory has recently "rediscovered" Pater and has yielded some fine results. Among the works to which my study is most indebted are Gerald Monsman's Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography (1980); Daniel T. O'Hara's The Romance of Interpretation: Visionary Criticism from Pater to de Man (1985); Carolyn Williams's Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism (1989); Richard Dellamora's Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism (1990); Jay Fellows's Tombs, Despoiled and Haunted: "Under-Textures" and "After-Thoughts" in Walter Pater (1991); and Jonathan Loesberg's Aestheticism and Deconstruction: Pater, Derrida, and de Man (1991).

6. As we know from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, the discourse of exhumation--or its less popular relation, bodysnatching--was very much in the popular culture, in the nineteenth century, mostly as a result of the rise of medicine as a discipline. The Anatomy Act of 1832 attempted to stem the tide of illicit corpse transactions. For an excellent history of this act, as well as how the corpse figures into nineteenth-century English society, see Richardson, Death, Dissection and the Destitute (1987).

It is also around this time that serious proposals were advanced to exhume Shakespeare, in order to reconcile him with his notoriously "bad" portraits. For one of the more bizarre of these proposals, see Ingleby, Shakespeare's Bones. The Proposal to Disinter Them, Considered in Relation to Their Possible Bearing on his Portraiture: Illustrated by Instances of Visits of the Living to the Dead (1883).

7. See, for instance, William S. Shuter's treatment of the phoenix image, or "palingenesis," in Pater and Hegel; Gerald Monsman's discussion of Duke Carl's empty coffin in Pater's Portrait, 135-8; and Carolyn's Williams' Transfigured World, 168-9.

8. These names have even been mentioned together before now. In 1959, for example, Ian Fletcher in his Walter Pater, uses all three as examples of a kind of individualist history with which Pater would be familiar (49-50). In Pater's Imaginary Portraits, Gerald Monsman also mentions all three in his description of historical methods that

"explore their subjects through selected individual lives" (36-7).

CHAPTER ONE

WALTER PATER AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICISM

> May it be my part in the future, to have not attained, but marked the goal of history, to have called it a name that no else had. Thierry called it *narration*, and M. Guizot *analysis*. I have named it *resurrection*, and this name will remain.
>
> Jules Michelet, Le Peuple

> In a bright dress he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child--a dark space on the brilliant grass--the black mould lying heaped up around it, weighing down the little jewelled branches of the dwarf rose-bushes in flower.
>
> Walter Pater, "The Child in the House"

Anachronism

I

Let me approach the unearthed corpses at the beginning of "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" through a hypothetical, and perhaps, naive argument. Much like the bog people of whom Seamus Heaney writes, here are bodies, human bodies, that represent an earlier period. As the villagers stand over the disrupted grave--this hypothetical argument continues--they represent physical evidence of commerce between two historical periods; bodies past and present are "face to face," as it were. The "German bone-science" that Pater enlists to prove that the corpses are both man and woman

would certainly be able to perform tests on both the living villagers and the corpses to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the bodies of both the living and the dead are, in fact, human bodies. They are separated by spaces of chronology, to be sure, but are joined, for the sake of this argument, by a physical "humanity."

The villagers that Pater uses to establish this historical curiosity are first attracted by some treasure said to be buried "in or about the antiquated ruin." As they go out of their way, far from "the tallest roofs of the grand old ducal town," their interest shifts from the promise of treasure to the corpses themselves. In fact, it does not take long for Pater, through the villagers, to attach these bones to an existing local legend, one that claims these are human bones with a historical and a textual specificity:

> . . . the disposition of the remains suggested to them a lively picture of a sullen night, the unexpected passing of a great army, and the two lovers rushing forth wildly at the sudden tumult outside their cheerful shelter, caught in the dark and trampled out so, surprised and unseen, among the heroes and the heavy guns. (120-1)

Not only do Pater's villagers reconstruct these bones--"flesh them out," if you will--but they transform them into fully emoting human beings, bestowed with endearing human qualities (bewilderment, love, curiosity). Indeed, some readers of this account might conceivably recognize, or empathize with, the lovers' motivations; we might even find

ourselves reacting viscerally to the tragedy that has befallen them. Despite their "strangeness," these bones, garlanded in jewels, have become people, folks with whom readers, Pater, and the villagers may have commerce and recognition. Put jewels around the arms of any man and women when they die, bury them, uncover them in one hundred years, and he or she would look more or less the same as these corpses do in the story.

With this recognition, this evidence, my hypothetical argument concludes: at least in this case, a continuing, unchanging, organic humanity transcends the historical differences in the portrait. Although the Foucaultian model of history tells us that "ruptures" radically separate historical epochs, our physical evidence tells us otherwise. Thus, we may see ourselves linked together through this physical humanity, and so chronological history has been transcended.

History, of course, has not been transcended. To question this conclusion, one need only note the problematic words I have taken for granted in my hypothetical reading: "recognition," "reconstruction," "transcend," "human," to name but a few. But I do not begin with this reading simply to set up a rhetorical straw man for my argument. The idea that humanity can somehow transcend history is one of Western culture's more tenacious assumptions, and it is not

to be easily replaced by later, putatively more "progressive" readings.

As Pater reconstructs the villagers' conception of the lovers' tragedy, he calls upon this desire to transcend this chronological model of history. Once we as readers accept Pater's textualizing of the bodies as representing "humanity," Pater has successfully prepared us for the Duke's anachronistic gesture: the Duke's desire to "bring Apollo with his lyre to Germany" (124). As Pater shows, the desire to transcend history stems from a complex network of assumptions about the use of time, the power of culture, and the construction of the genius.[1]

II

The term "anachronism" is traditionally used to describe any artifact that has, for whatever reason, slipped out of its "proper" historical position. Thus, the term generally implies a judgment, as if the very act of identifying an anachronism were also an attempt to return every cultural and historical artifact to its proper, chronological space. Such uses of the term, however, often depend on "progressive" notions of history, as Pater does in his construction of the *Aufklärung* as the long-awaited light shining on a dark age, as well as a return to Apollonian ideals.[2]

Pater's use of anachronism in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," and in this passage from "Aesthetic Poetry" does indeed

imply a judgment, but not the one that might at first seem apparent:

> And yet it is one of the charming anachronisms of a poet, who, while he handles an ancient subject, never becomes an antiquarian, but animates his subject by keeping it always close to himself . . .
>
> In handling a subject of Greek legend, anything in the way of an actual revival must always be impossible. Such vain antiquarianism is a waste of the poet's power. The composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us; to deduct from that experience, to obliterate any part of it, to come face to face with the people of a past age, . . . is as impossible as to become a little child, or enter again into the womb and be born. (Selected Writings 195-6)[3]

Pater would have it that while any attempt to engage the past is anachronistic, the poet's anachronism is harmless as long as he can resist the urge to reconstruct the past--something that Duke Carl is finally unable to do. The poet's anachronism is as "charming" as the Duke's originally benign interest in Celtes. When the Duke's desires turn toward effecting an Apollonian "revival," however, Pater makes his efforts seem increasingly absurd and eventually self-destructive.[4]

Thus, the term anachronism is more useful in describing cultural and historical rather than purely chronological shifts. Indeed, we cannot even discuss anachronism without using cultural artifacts whose representations are more important than where they appear chronologically. At the same time, then, that anachronism is based a model of chronological progression, it suspends that model at the

moment when it inevitably becomes manifested in culture. The Duke's desire to "revive" Apollo in Germany, then, is problematic because it is attempt to conflate two distinct cultures, rather than because a progressive chronology has been transgressed.

Pater does depend on the model of time as progression, however. The villagers' own history, for example, appears static, stalled at some critical moment past which they cannot progress. Because the villagers' are incapable of showing the progress of time, Pater uses "natural" time, and the paradoxical image of decay as growth, to signify historical change:[5]

> Whole quarryfuls of wrought stone had been piled along the streets and around the squares, and were now grown, in truth, like nature's self again, in their rough, time-worn massiveness, with weeds and wild flowers where their decay accumulated, blossoming, always the same, beyond people's memories, every summer, as the storks came back to their platforms on the remote chimney tops. Without, all was as it had been on the eve of the Thirty Years' War [1618-48]. (121)

Even this natural time, which appears to transcend the unstable constructs of human time, depends on a model of time as progress. The decay that covers the man-"wrought" stone <u>returns</u> to a state that signifies the failure of human ability either to duplicate or to keep up with this "natural" time: it is "beyond people's memories." The seemingly natural decay, in other words, is defined as such by cultural standards.

It is this apparent stability of physical knowledge to which Pater appeals in his portrayal of the Duke's "conversion" to Apollonian ideals:

> . . . the young Duke Carl *laid his hand* on an old volume of the year 1486, printed in heavy type, with frontispiece, perhaps, by Albert Dürer--Ars Versificandi: The Art of Versification: by Conrad Celtes. Crowned poet of the Emperor Frederick the Third, he had the right to speak on that subject; for while he vindicated as best he might old German literature against the charge of barbarism, he did also a man's part towards *reviving* in the Fatherland the *knowledge* of the poetry of Greece and Rome . . . (123; emphasis added)[6]

Here and elsewhere, Pater takes great pains to situate each historical artifact as specifically as possible, as if the very act of picking the book up was itself an attempt to efface chronology. If it is questionable to say that merely touching the book gives Duke Carl the desire to act anachronistically, the book clearly inspires such actions--such as bringing Apollo to Medieval Germany.

To define this desire in terms of cultural phenomena, however, Pater employs the rhetoric of revelation. The vision that Duke Carl receives comes not so much out of his reading of Celtes's written text as it does from Pater's attention to the sensual details of the Celtes volume. This knowledge-through-touch also depends on the converging of other convenient elements:

> Those verses, coming to the boy's hand *at the right moment*, brought a beam of effectual daylight to a whole magazine of observation, fancy, desire, stored up from the first impressions of childhood. To bring Apollo and his lyre to Germany! It was

> precisely that he, Carl, desired to do--was, as he might flatter himself, actually doing. (123-4)

Once again, as with the villagers and the corpses, we have a dependence upon physical connection. Such a touch would seem to have the power to take the Duke outside that which confines him, that is, his culture and his history. Indeed, after this touch, the chains of "German barbarism" seem to crumble under the power of revelation.

We might dismiss this touch if it were the only time that Duke Carl looked to the physical realm to explain what his intellect cannot. Later in the portrait, when he is unable to identify a cause for his Apollonian desire, he wonders if "a physical cause might lie beneath this strange restlessness, like the imperfect reminiscence of something that had passed in an earlier life" (133).[7] For Duke Carl, it seems, sensory evidence participates in two worlds: it is the courier of phenomena transcending particular cultures at the same that it provides scientific grounding for phenomena inside culture. But this laying on of hands works only because it occurs "at the right moment," thus allowing the "beam of effectual daylight" to inhabit the Duke's brain like a revelation. Pater does not tell us if this "moment" occurs at the "right" time in the Duke's life, in the continuum of temporarily frozen German culture, or in the happy convergence of historically transcendent elements (i.e., the hand of Apollo) with cultural desire. Like the Duke, Pater finds it best to leave the source of this moment

mystified. For Duke Carl, this mystification, this unequivocal and physical evidence of "a world beyond," becomes *carte blanche* for his other anachronistic writings of culture and history.

Despite evidence of a direct line of communication between the spirit of Apollo and the contemporary German, Duke Carl chooses to bring Apollo to his "candle-lit people" through French doors. Pater presents this layered *melange* of anachronisms in a single figure: to Germany comes "Apollo in the dandified costume of Lewis the Fourteenth" (124). These inter-cultural maneuvers involve the staging of French plays, such as Marivaux's Death of Hannibal, wherein "Duke Carl himself, attired after the newest French fashion, played the part of Hannibal [247-183 B.C.]" (125).[8] Examples of other such willful anachronisms abound. By orchestrating and constructing his life with these anachronisms, the Duke, one might argue, has succeeded in his goal of marginalizing his own culture. As Pater tells in the afterword, the *Aufklärung* sprang full blown into German history through Lessing, Herder, and Goethe, and accusations of German barbarism remained relatively dormant for another fifty years. As long as the Duke is in the midst of this Franco-Apollonianism, it seems he has bridged the differences among the cultures represented here.

The Duke contradicts these so-called super-cultural manipulations, however, in his manipulation of culturally

specific phenomena such as fashion, drama, and architecture. But even these cultural models are sometimes not "authentic" enough: "One fault only Carl found in his French models, and was resolute to correct. He would have, at least within, real marble in place of stucco, and, if he might, perhaps solid gold for gilding" (125). For someone who has been touched by a spirit that has shown itself to the Duke as having the power to shine through the murkiness of culture and its machinations, Duke Carl involves himself with costly, decidedly unspiritual materials. These materials, in turn, become the fabric of the Duke's "new" self-presentation. Thus, he is constructed reciprocally by the cultures within which he constructs. The portrait of Duke Carl, at this point, is no longer the story of a man inhabited by the "spirit of Apollo" or the manifestation of some long-awaited Hellenic *Zeitgeist*. It now becomes the story of a man whose desperate desire to transcend culture drives him further into the material economy of the very culture from which he attempts to disengage himself. By extension, anachronism, as it allows one to go beyond cultural boundaries, fixes one all the more firmly inside one's culture.

Perhaps the anachronistic power over the Duke is most evident in the assumption that one can "revive" within a culture a "knowledge" that, according to Pater, had never existed in that culture. The Duke sees the possibility of

transcending his own culture and history by replacing it with another past one. It is through this fantasy of transcendence that the Duke begins to think of transcending his own culture, with his eye on "some more favoured world beyond it." Again, the dream cannot break from the culture that sustains it--this is not the prisoner's glimpse of the sun shining on the prison walls--or so Pater tells us: "[the more favoured world] had ever been the dream of the ghost-ridden yet deep-feeling and certainly meek German soul" (123). Even the desire itself is "nothing new."

Viewed from this perspective, the terms Enlightenment, *Aufklärung*, and *Renaissance* are themselves anachronistic conceptions. On this point, Michel Foucault's essay, "What is Enlightenment?," is useful. Foucault says that Kant conceived of *Aufklärung* in terms of a "way out" of "immaturity," and that such a conception implied a notion of historical progress that is problematized by the fact that Kant's "way of philosophizing" still plays a prominent role in postmodern society; we still think in terms of progress at a time when such thought must appear anti-progressive. Foucault proposes that instead of being conceived in terms of accumulation, knowledge ought to be

> conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the *historical* analysis of the *limits* that are imposed on us and an experiment with the *possibility of going beyond them*. (The Foucault Reader 50; emphasis added).

Foucault's critique points out that attempts to reverse or subvert chronology, history, or culture cannot be conceived of apart from a recognition that such boundaries are inescapable. The notion of a radical enlightening, the sudden flood of light in a darkened room, depends on the assumption that the manifestation of knowledge always procedes from complete ignorance to total awareness. The possibility of bringing Apollo to Germany, at the same time that it is a direct affront to this assumption, exists nonetheless.

Similarly, when Pater's villagers see the remains of a century past, their own positions within history do not fall like scales from their eyes. Unlike the touch of the book that seems to convince the Duke that such immediate contact between cultures is possible, these corpses do not present themselves to the villagers as the kind of physical evidence that would allow them to enter the past. The lovers' bodies had been textualized long before they were physically uncovered:

> . . . for the minds of some long-remembering people their discovery set at rest an old query. It had never been precisely known what was become of the young Duke Carl, who disappeared from the world a century before . . . . Restless, romantic, eccentric, had he passed on with the victorious host, and taken the chances of an obscure soldier's life?

Indeed, other documents contribute to the discursive web that surrounds these bodies:

> Certain old letters hinted at a different ending--love-letters which provided for a secret meeting, preliminary perhaps to the final departure of the young Duke (who, by the usage of his realm, could only with extreme difficulty go whither, or marry whom, he pleased) to whatever worlds he had chosen, not of his own people. (120)

The Duke's desire to escape culture not only produces his eventual downfall but has the opposite effect, making him a prominent cultural figure and a figuration of culture. His escape leads to the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, which in turn become a village legend, insinuating itself into every villager's life, passed along, reworked, reconstructed. When the bodies finally arrive on the scene a century later, they do not so much function as corroboration of the legend but as another, admittedly sensational and vibrant, text that feeds the thick network of discourse that prefigures the corpses. The Duke who sought to become pure spirit has instead become the stuff of popular discourse.

If a recognition that transcends culture and history is impossible, then what about the science to which Pater appeals in the portrait?[9] If this "German bone-science" is able to determine secondary sex characteristics from two sets of bones, then surely it can make this recognition a successful and valid one. Unfortunately, the term "German bone-science" may sound a bit odd to today's reader. To the trained eye, the practices that make up this term may appear even more problematic. These problems are exacerbated by

the fact that Pater attaches this science to a specific nationality. If the Germans were the first to develop bone-science, as Pater's term seems to imply, then what about their culture helped them produce this new form of knowledge?[10] Even if we were to restrict this scientific mode of "truth" to Western cultures (a restriction that would logically nullify its claim to general truth), then we need to consider that this bone-science technology is the product of a long history, a technology that is constructed in and through culture. Thus, we can talk about the "history of science" and the "philosophy of science" precisely because they are produced by history and cannot therefore lie outside it.[11]

In any case, Pater undercuts this speculation on how the villagers may read the unearthed corpses when he enters, *deus ex machina*, and tells us the story of what really happened to Duke Carl of Rosenmold and his lover. He allows the villagers, and us, to puzzle and speculate over the remains--indeed, for the most part, doing the speculating for us--and then enters abruptly to set the record straight. Since our speculation for the purposes of this essay is on historical rupture and separation, it is fitting that Pater begin his pronouncement with this preface:

> Time, at the beginning of the eighteenth century might seem to have been standing still almost since the Middle Age--since the days of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, at which period, . . . a sudden tide of wealth, flowing through the grand-ducal exchequer, had left a kind of golden

> architectural splendour on the place, always too ample for its population. (121)

We can compare the villagers' reaction to the exhumed bodies to the "population's" response to the town's architecture. "Always" lets us know the inability to absorb this "ampleness" is strongly embedded, having had "almost since the Middle Age" to do its work.

Thus, Pater asks us to see the corpses and the villagers as chronologically and culturally similar. After all, any era defined by "frozen time" produces the same kind of people; the people have not "progressed." Pater's "stepping-in," then, is a significant historicizing gesture. Since the villagers are unable to distinguish historical difference, Pater must perform their reading for them. Indeed, the catalyst for their curiosity is a "popular fancy," a fairy tale much like the ones that Pater sets up as evidence of a superstitious, pre-*Aufklärung*, Germany. It is Pater, from his chronologically advantageous position in 1887, who must historically situate the villagers and Duke Carl.

The villagers, as well as Pater himself, praise Duke Carl for bringing the "daylight, the Apolline aurora . . . to his candle-lit people" (124). This portrayal of the Duke, however, assumes both that the Duke is untroubled in his role as the Germanic Prometheus and that the role itself is as intellectually altruistic as the Duke wishes it to seem. Duke Carl's anxiety, after all, is rooted in his

desire to transcend culture, not to transform it. At every turn, he attempts to enter another time or nationality, to remove himself from the Germany that holds him. Yet his tendency to see around him a cultural primitivism or sameness, as we have seen with the villagers, is itself a culturally and historically identifiable proclivity. Beyond his increasingly desperate efforts to destroy culture, class, and history--he even goes so far as to stage his own funeral--the Duke's most significant anachronism is his desire to dismantle the imprisoning structures of the discourses that have produced his own identity.

Since to transcend culture would be to transcend the self, this cultural annihilation turns out to entail a kind of self-annihilation.[12] Duke Carl's violent death, then, should not surprise us, especially after Pater speaks of the "*Resurgam* on Carl's empty coffin" (153). In the end, the Duke and his "beggarmaid" wife, whom he asks to "believe in him," "*flee into* the tumult" (152; emphasis added). But even this last-ditch effort to destroy self, wife, and culture, to achieve some kind of desperate transcendence, is met with a political, historicizing response: the trampling hooves of a very contemporary German army.

Prior to this point, the Duke sees himself as one who moves freely between cultures and chronologies. "Middle Age" Germany, for example, becomes present and future Germany:

> The spirits of distant Hellas would reawake in the men and women of little German towns. Distant times, the most alien thoughts, would come near together, as elements in a great historic symphony. A kind of ardent, new patriotism awoke in him, sensitive for the first time at the words *national* poesy, *national* art and literature, *German* philosophy. (144-5; emphasis in original)

It is possible now for the Duke to consider such concepts as "patriotism" and "nationalism" precisely because he believes them to be, like himself, disengaged from culture. These formations are the acts of a free, self-determining will, of a mind that can orchestrate a "symphony" of artifacts, free from their place in chronology or culture, simply because it has disengaged its interest from it, because it has wrenched itself from culture's hold: "[a] free, open space had been determined, which something now to be created, created by him, must occupy" (145). This space has been cleared by culture's departure. He is now, as the villagers comment as he passes down the street, Apollo himself.

This "space," however, does not remain "free" and "open." It becomes occupied by cultural artifacts until the Duke becomes "fairly captive to the Middle Ages"--the point at which time was said to have stopped in Germany. Indeed, the Duke experiences an encroaching anxiety as he attempts to recover a different type of cultural artifact:

> Surely, past ages, could one get at the historic soul of them, were not dead but living, rich in company, for the entertainment, the expansion, of the present: and Duke Carl was still without suspicion of the cynic afterthought that such historic soul was but an arbitrary substitution, a generous loan of one's self. (145)

Because they are so easily manipulated, the more obvious cultural signifiers, such as fashion, do not trouble the Duke's view of history. Such easy manipulations satisfy little, however, and the Duke finds himself trying to mine what he calls the "historic soul" of "past ages." The problem is that while the signifiers may be easily manipulated, what the Duke sees as the historical signifieds are not so compliant. Thus, even these seemingly malleable artifacts illustrate the Duke's anachronistic problem: cultural artifacts (clothing, the theatre, books, "historic souls," himself) cannot be detached from history and cannot be regarded as transcendental or universal.

Pater tells us that the Duke is free from the skeptical impulse and does not see that what we do when we seem to touch this "historical soul"--or when we "recognize" elements from past ages--is that we read by "substitution," by replacing others' cultural constructions with our own. Indeed, this notion of subjective substitution becomes the Rosetta Stone that the Duke is looking for--a subjectivity that is instinctual at the same time that it is ahistorical and super-cultural:

> Straight through life, straight through nature and man, with one's own self-knowledge as a light thereon, not by way of the geographical Italy or Greece, lay the road to the new Hellas, to be realized now as the outcome of home-born German genius. (147)

What can be mapped--geography, fashion, chronology--can be erased. But it was the mind of the "genius" all along that

had the ability to bypass culture, it was the mind of the genius that Apollo touched in the first place, and it is the mind of the genius now that is able to create its own "free, open space," its own culture.

This elusive "historic soul," however, one in which only the genius is free to participate, is constructed from the very signifiers that have been dismissed as mere *accoutrements*. The Duke, for instance, is defined by his own anachronistic movements, and not by his ability to revive Apollo. Dismissing these *accoutrements*, however, substituting the autonomous subject, the genius, for historical specificity places the genius making the substitution in a position of unassailable power. Within this model, all previous ages, along with the labyrinthine and manifold signifying processes that make them up, are subjugated, laid low for easy commerce between geniuses--an act made all the more political by its tacit claim that politics is nothing but earthly machinations, something that can be plotted and eliminated. By positioning himself above the "fairy-tale" culture of eighteenth-century Germany, in other words, by claiming that only he can speak to the true Apollo, the Duke drives himself deeper into the politics of power--a paradox that eventually leads to his demise.

III

I have suggested that Pater is, at least in part, complicit in the Duke's anachronistic maneuvers, that they

both operate from a set of assumptions that seek to transcend culture and history. Pater, for instance, by inscribing a chronology based on *Aufklärung* and revival within German history, acts from a super-historical position. Such a position presupposes not only that history is evolutionary, but that whoever occupies this super-historical position can enter and exit its different steps at will. In this regard, my use of the term "super-historical" draws upon Nietzsche's similar term, *überhistorische*, or "super-historical," as it has often been translated:

> [the super-historical philosophers] are unanimous in the theory that the past and the present are one and the same, typically alike in all their diversity, and forming together a picture of eternally present imperishable types of unchangeable value and significance. Just as hundreds of different languages respond to the same constant and elemental needs of mankind, and one who understood the needs could learn nothing new from the languages; so the 'super-historical' philosopher sees all the history of nations and individuals from within. He has divine insight into the original meaning of the hieroglyphs. . . . ("The Use and Abuse of History," II:14)

While both Pater and Duke Carl fit these definitions of the super-historical reader, we still cannot conflate the two so easily. Indeed, the Duke crosses Pater's line between "charming" and "antiquarian" anachronisms. Although Pater concludes the portrait by praising the legacy of Duke Carl,[13] he goes out of his way to illustrate the Duke's historical naivete, such as in the Duke's obsession with French fashion. Pater also implies that the Duke,

mesmerized by the novelty of anachronological movement, is no longer able to consider contemporary political realities:

> Meantime, his purpose was grown definite to visit that original country of the Muses, from which the pleasant things of Italy had been but derivative; to brave the difficulties in the way of leaving home at all, the difficulties also of access to Greece, in the present condition of the country. (133)[14]

Even if the Duke's newfound ability to occupy an idealized Hellas prevents him from taking into account contemporary political crises, Pater makes sure that we know that he knows--even as tells us that such considerations are relatively minor.

Pater's tendency to occupy conflicting positions, even within the same text, also contributes to the difficulty of determining his relation to the Duke's position. Moreover, he does not always discuss the implications of his conflicting positions. We have already seen, for instance, that Pater is somewhat equivocal in his position on pre-*Aufklärung* Germany. At first, he seems to endorse and perpetuate the notion of Germany as the seat of barbarism and intellectual naivete. He speaks of the "certainly meek German soul" (123); the architecture of Duke Carl's town as "too ample for its population" (121); the folks that make up that population as "candle-lit people" (122); and the epoch itself as "that dim time" (123). Simplifying Pater's position in this way, however, ignores the ways in which he undercuts it.

For instance, one of the more prevalent stereotypes of pre-*Aufklärung* Germany is the people's supposed "belief" in fairy tales, in a mythology at which we, in our historically advantageous position, are supposed to scoff. Although Pater himself includes more than few references to what we must imagine to be this uniquely German proclivity, his reading of these "fairy tales" is more complex. For example, he speaks of this time in terms of a "hyperborean German darkness," of a time when "there were violent robbers, nay, real live devils, in every German wood" (123). Historical or contextual reading here takes the place of historical judgment. Indeed, Pater presents himself in the act of reading: during his description of pre-*Aufklärung* Germany, he corrects himself in mid-sentence and describes the phenomenon of the German woods in terms of what he perceives to be the contemporary conventional wisdom. Instead of discussing the absurdity of goblins in the German woods, he finds more value in examining how these conceptions are created.[15] In this way, Pater's statement that "real live devils" lived in every German wood is a radically pragmatic, as well as an anachronistic, reading. He reads the phenomenon through what he perceives to be the contemporary perspective and, in doing so, at once imitates and historicizes the Duke's ahistorical maneuvers. For Pater, that history must be textualized gives the text its reality and validity. Thus, to describe the architecture of

the town, he historicizes "fairy tales" in terms of those for whom they "lived":

> The sloping Gothic roofs for carrying off the heavy snows still indented the sky--a world of tiles, with space uncurtailed for the awkward gambols of that very German goblin, Hans Klapper, on the long, slumberous, northern nights. (121)

In this reading, Pater "occupies" this cultural artifact and imagines the "gambols" of this "goblin" and, by participating in the mythology himself, forgoes judgment. The absence of judgment, in this case, is enabled by an aesthetic, ahistorical response to the snow-draped architecture that he describes.

Any examination of Pater's complicity in Duke Carl's anachronistic maneuvers would need to consider the Duke's death. As the other Imaginary Portraits testify, this is by no means the only time that Pater provides grisly ends for his characters.[16] Nonetheless, we cannot write off the Duke's death-by-trampling as just another self-indulgent exercise in sadism. Considering how thoroughly the Duke has been constructed by the discourse of anachronism, is there a judgment in his death? As I have intimated earlier, the Duke takes great pains to transcend the culture that produced him--or, I should say, the product (himself) that his culture produced. The Duke even attempts finally to transgress class boundaries by marrying the so-called "beggarmaid," and in doing so, aligns himself with the prevalent fairy tales and myths about nobles and commoners.

Any escape by way of these cultural contortions is nullified, however, by a political exigency (the German Army) that will not be marginalized.

However much Pater uses this "mysterious" death to distance himself from his portrait of Duke Carl is problematized, as we have seen, by the rhetorical maneuvers that make such a determination nearly impossible. Determining judgment may, indeed, be unnecessary: if the Duke's cultural anxiety is manifested by his desire for self-annihilation, then he succeeds. This "natural" closure, however, does not end either Pater's, the villagers', or our reading. Thus, the exposure of the corpses also prevents historical closure--a closure that refuses binary judgments and readings. The Duke's manner of death may have more to say about Pater's anxiety for the nebulous complexity of discourse, and for culture constructed discursively, a discourse, then, where clear judgments are hard to come by. Like his desire for physical, scientific grounding elsewhere, like the corpses that demand to be read at the beginning of "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," Pater clings resolutely to the physical at the same time that he appeals to an ideal that seeks to transcend the physical. It should not surprise us that such a duality is discursively, and intriguingly, anachronistic.

Reconciliation

I

In some ways, the notion of reconciliation is inevitably anachronistic. If anachronism implicates culture as well as chronology, then attempts to "reconcile," or "merge," any two discourses are also attempts to bypass the conditions within which each was produced. Along these lines, Pater would claim throughout his career that "dogmatic criticism" had seen its day, and that the "modern" method had replaced it. Within this "modern" paradigm, the need to reconcile--or, in this case, to make compatible--discourses is supplanted by a more historical reading in which the scholar must examine "the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which it was actually produced, if we would really understand it" (PP 9).[17]

By the time that he delivered the lectures in 1892 that were to become chapters I, VI, and VIII in Plato and Platonism, Pater considered that, at least as regards Plato's thought, this historical method was the only "really critical study" (11). Indeed, the first seven pages of Plato and Platonism are an examination of what Pater considers to be at stake in historical inquiry, such as the historicizing of philosophy and the problem of the "mind" in history. What is perhaps more consequential for our purposes is that Pater attempts to displace in these pages the notion of textual recognition: the desire to conflate separate discourses on the basis of a superficial similarity. He warns, for example, against seeing Plato as

an anticipation of "modern knowledge"; there is, he informs us, "nothing absolutely new" about Plato. Instead of this "outdated" kind of reading, Pater recycles an alternative model for textual production. In order to raise and then subvert the assumptions behind such things as textual origin and novelty, he proposes

> a palimpsest, a tapestry of which the actual threads have served before, or like the animal frame itself, every particle of which has already lived and died many times over. Nothing but the life-giving principle of cohesion is new; the new perspective, the resultant complexion, the expressiveness which familiar thoughts attain by novel juxtaposition. (8)[18]

Despite some critics' contention that the entire Pater corpus may be read as a "single unifying image," this model of the palimpsest differs significantly from other Paterian models.[19] For instance, Pater plays with anachronistic historical structures in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold;" in his palimpsest, however, evidence of the past disappears and is lost so that new discourses may be produced in its place. While a "core" frame for the palimpsest may have at one time existed, there no longer remains any transcendent constant against which the "new perspective" may be read. If we think that we see the past frame inside the frame of the present, that too is an illusion, as is the hope of restoring or reconstructing the past. All that is left, in fact, is whatever can be generated from the "novel juxtaposition" of the old, restructured threads (or texts) with the new.

Within this model, anachronism can be produced by a "side-by-side" comparison to past "forms," not the "original" forms, mind you, but from what has been constructed and re-constructed from a complex reading and "expression" of history. Whatever comparisons we may make, then, are called into question by the fact that we are comparing representations, and representations of representations. Thus, communicating with past *Geiste* is not a transcendent truth, but a reading possibility completely situated within the cultural and historical frame of the reader.

Pater's palimpsest also produces alternative models of reconciliation: "threads" both disappear and reappear, both dismiss and invite comparison, both blend and stand apart. Within such a model, the standard reconciliation is merely one of many possible descriptions for the palimpsest.[20] Instead, the palimpsest itself is produced by the *question* of reconciliation, a question that in Pater's case becomes more generative than definitive. In other words, as I will use the term, reconciliation is not merely the reconciliatory act, but the discourse of reconciliation. Thus, I enlarge the term here to include more than just a way to describe a mode of agreement. As I use it, "reconciliation" includes virtually every reconciliatory possibility.

The necessity for broadening the term becomes apparent when we see how reconciliation operates. In general terms, the concept of "reconciliation" implies a coming together, a merging, a *restoration* of a state of compatibility between two people/nations/discourses, etc. that have become separate. Although these commonsense connotations of "reconciliation" tend to emphasize agreement, the term's meaning depends on opposition. Even something as innocuous-sounding as agreement, after all, presupposes two sides that were at one time separated by difference. Such oppositions are usually drawn along the lines of dispute/accord, war/peace, cacophony/harmony, or any structure that describes both a condition of separateness and unity. That the line between such terms can be permeated to the point of uselessness is testimony to the difficulties of reconciliation. Indeed, as this line becomes increasingly arbitrary, it would seem that the two terms in the opposition "agree" more than oppose each other. If we figure in the Paterian emphasis with subjective impressions, then the terms themselves become arbitrary. By considering the *question* of reconciliation, such shifts then become possibilities rather than logical contradictions.

It would be difficult to discuss the issue of reconciliation in Pater without first discussing Hegel, whose work Pater knew well. Within the Hegelian dialectic, reconciliation or, in this case, *Aufhebung* is produced by

conflict, by the clashing of two opposites. This "synthesis," as the term is often translated, is born out of the paradoxical transcendence and preservation of thesis and antithesis. Thus, conflict is transmitted through, and thus makes up the basis of, history.[21] Indeed, the term itself, *Aufhebung*, contains both these elements, as it means at once "to preserve," "to abolish," and "to raise." Dialectical movement in Hegel is a process of continuing perfection, retaining what is "true" or "actual" and transcending what is incomplete, and in so doing, involves itself constantly with opposition and conflict. So crucial is such conflict to Hegel's system that he claims that the "aim" of any philosophical system is a "lifeless universal" and that the opposition to this system "is rather [the subject matter's] limit of the subject matter; it is where the thing stops, or it is what the thing is not" (Phenomenology 2-3).

Produced as it is in contradiction, the question of reconciliation, in its many manifestations, thus concerns issues of power. *Aufhebung*, for instance, implies a more or less equal footing between the conflicting elements: antithesis must have the power to threaten the dominant thesis. But such a model, though quite different in its political implications, is not so radical a departure from commonsense notions of reconciliation and agreement. What happens, though, when one term exercises its more substantial power and entirely subsumes the other? Can we

even call this forced reconciliation a reconciliation? Certainly little has been "preserved" as in *Aufhebung*. One might even argue that force itself nullifies the possibilities for anything that we might call reconciliation, that force and agreement are mutually exclusive. The problem with these kinds of arguments, however, is that they imply that displays of power have nothing to do with how "agreement" is produced, that even what appears to be the most amiable of accords is the result of complex manipulations of power.[22] When agreement or reconciliation becomes the overwhelming desire and interest of one or two conflicting parties, the means engaged to enact such "accords" are quickly forgotten.

As we will see in Pater's description of Renaissance scholarship, not all forced reconciliations have the *appearance* of violence. In Gaston de Latour (1888), for example, when Pater discusses the ego as the model for reading, he shows how any reading that subsumes the possibility of other readings operates from a position of autonomous force:

> the individual mind . . . at once the unique organ, and the only matter, of knowledge,--the wonderful energy, the reality and authority of that, in its absolute loneliness, conforming all things to its law, without witnesses as without judge, without appeal, save to itself. (105)

That Pater may be harmlessly discussing the pleasures of the autonomous mind here is countered by his use of political metaphors. What opposes the mind's "law" must be

overwhelmed or "conformed." This conformation is likewise effected from a position that is utterly unassailable, *sans* "witnesses," *sans* "judge," *sans* "appeal," *sans* everything--"save . . . itself." Readings that the ego produces and readings that the ego opposes are indeed reconciled within this model, but by force and compliance.

If, as this model implies, agreement can be displaced as a condition of reconciliation, then we may include within this question readings or terms in which agreement is indefinitely deferred--a double position, or paradox. In other words, we may juxtapose terms or readings as a strategy for generating new texts from their juxtaposition. Pater, for example, often raises two possibilities for readings, leaves them juxtaposed, and never attempts to reconcile the two, or even give his reasons for comparing or contrasting the two terms. In the "Coleridge" essay, for instance, he contrasts Coleridge's "absolute spirit" with the "relative" or "modern" one that Pater himself favors without attempting to find common ground between the two. In this way, Pater often does not produce for us a clear third term of a dialectic.[23] As we will see in his discussion of Pico Della Mirandola, the movement towards a standard reconciliation of two opposing terms is a problematic one for Pater, since it implies that a coercion that is philosophically untenable. Instead, Pater uses this Arnoldian sense of difference, this charting of courses

between two opposing tendencies, precisely because his own positions become more visible against the historical and discursive contexts from which others have operated.

At first glance, it may seem that under the auspices of opening up possibilities for readings, no exercise of force has occurred in this paradox, that judgment has somehow been deferred. The act of choosing, then juxtaposing, two terms or readings, however, is, despite appearances, a substantial exercise of power--precisely because this act of choice and juxtaposition takes on the appearance of harmlessness, chance, or arbitrariness. For example, facile comparisons to Hitler, as we have seen, have considerable political force and repercussions. At the same time, then, that we realize that these paradox reconciliations are novel and interesting in the reverberations they touch off, the putative absence of judgment or responsibility does not mean that some kind of, often more violent, reconciliation has not occurred.

What is perhaps more crucial in this model is that any such choice or juxtaposition inevitably takes on the power of a "design." As we see in "The Child in the House," for example, the sensory details that the young narrator absorbs arbitrarily become in his later account a predestined persona. Once in place, any such design is granted an agency that excludes at least as many possibilities as it includes. Conflict, in this case, is not so much negotiated

as it is ignored. As we shall see the following section's discussion of "Pico Della Mirandola," Pater offers an alternative to merely discounting no longer efficacious positions.

II

In "Pico Della Mirandola," Pater outlines three approaches to the reconciliation of discourses. Using the "religions of antiquity" and the "religion of Christ" as the targets of these approaches, Pater then posits three methodologies: the "modern" or historical perspective, the intellectually naive fifteenth-century approach, and what finally becomes his own position--an amalgamation, that is to say a reconciliation, of the two.[24]

In the first approach, Pater description of the modern scholar is most likely an amalgamation of Hegel and Renan. This approach, says Pater, identifies all religions as "natural products" of the human mind:

> . . . at least in their origin, their growth, and decay, they have common laws, and are not to be isolated from the other movements of the human mind in the periods in which they respectively prevailed . . . they rise spontaneously out of the human mind, as expressions of the varying phases of its sentiment concerning the unseen world; (R 25)

Religion, then, is the product of a kind of "organic historicism"; religion is historically and culturally specific, to be sure, but it is also always the result of some governing, albeit "spontaneous," force. So even though the modern scholar says that "every intellectual product

must be judged from the point of view of the age and the people in which it was produced," there is at least a grounding to the generation of all religions. Indeed, Pater reads all religions through this rhetoric of organicism.

Although it is supposedly naturally produced, this organicism nonetheless contains supernatural elements:

> The basis of the reconciliation would thus be the inexhaustible activity of and creativeness of the human mind itself, in which all religions alike have their root, and in which all alike are reconciled; just as the fancies of childhood and the thoughts of old age meet and are laid to rest, in the experience of the individual. (26)[25]

The "human mind" that once generated only "spontaneous" and "natural products" has now become somewhat autonomous from its previously organic function. Now it is capable of "creativeness" and "inexhaustible activity." Thus, religion becomes artistic production--historically specific discourse drawn back to its "creative" origin. Within this paradigm, one could imagine that meticulous historical scholarship could eventually dismantle the years of discursive activity. Following this logic, all religions would eventually be equally recognizable by their common basis in the imaginative function of the mind which, by implication, lies outside and is immune to the play of history. Thus, this modern approach is at once historical and ahistorical.

Renaissance scholars, on the other hand, lacked "the very rudiments of the historic sense," and likewise made no attempts to veil their belief in absolutes:

> [T]hey were thus thrown back upon the quicksand of allegorical interpretation. The religions were to be reconciled, not as successive stages in a regular development of the religious sense, but as subsisting side by side, and substantially in agreement with one another. (26)

From the fifteenth-century Italian perspective, we might read "substantially in agreement" as the assumption that all religions are, in varying states of nascency, Roman Catholicism. What Pater identifies here as a "lack" is the levelling of difference, whether it be through allegory or the ignorance, witting or unwitting, of historical flux. What is, in other words, a forced reconciliation, according to Pater, comes from naivete masked as intellectual braggadocio in the figure of Pico Della Mirandola who at one time "offered to defend nine hundred paradoxes, drawn from the most opposite sources, against all comers" (30).[26]

It is significant that Pater emphasizes naivete rather than politics here. Renaissance scholarship is not so much naive, as Pater implies, as it is political. In Pico's case, for instance, the act of resolving these paradoxes was developed, performed, as well as eventually punished and resolved by structures that were conspicuously political. Indeed, the outcome of Pico intellectual calisthenics is a model wherein all religions conform to the most powerful political structure in the world at that time, and its power was evidenced by the fact that what was "merely intellectual" for Pico was matched elsewhere in the Church's history by brutal religious reconciliations. This is not to

say that Pater operates under a facile separation of the political and the aesthetic. As Jonathan Loesberg compellingly argues, the aesthetic for Pater is precisely the site where politics, history, and philosophy is engaged (4). Nonetheless, there is a marked difference between what the traditional characterization of the Renaissance individual--shrewdly political, educated, and eloquent--and the seemingly childlike harmlessness of Pico's worldview that emerges later in the essay.

Indeed, it is a reactionary, rather than a naive, will-to-reconcile that is the issue when Pater had taken Coleridge to task five years earlier:

> [Coleridge] is ever restlessly scheming to 'apprehend the absolute,' to affirm it effectively, to get it acknowledged. It was an effort, surely, an effort of sickly thought, that saddened his mind, and limited the operation of his unique poetic gift. (A 68-9)

Pater seems to imply that Coleridge's dilemma is in attempting to read absolutes pragmatically--"apprehend," "affirm," "get it acknowledged." As Pater implies, reading fluid movement through fixed glasses only leads to confusion and is doomed to failure. It is a tragedy, Pater says, but not a total one. Beyond the scholar's misguidedness, in other words, there is not much at stake in this absolutist position. There is no acknowledgment that this resolutely pragmatic approach to absolute truth, this determination to "get it acknowledged," could have an effect *beyond* the mind of the scholar that is obsessed by this need to force this

reconciliation of the relative with the absolute. It is a radically personal failure and nothing more.

Stripped of of its consequence, his critique of Coleridge eventually provides the antithetical background for an essay that finally praises or, in Paterian parlance, gives an "appreciation" of Coleridge:

> The philosophic critic, at least, will value, even in the works of imagination, seemingly the most *intuitive*, the power of understanding in them, their logical process of construction, the spectacle of a *supreme intellectual dexterity* which they afford. (81; emphasis added)

For Pater, then, this will to absolutes that he calls indicative of all of Coleridge's "literary life" is finally nothing more than an unfortunate chapter in life of the scholar.

As Pater's identification of Coleridge's "supreme intellectual dexterity" and "intuition" testifies, Pater's reasons for marginalizing the issue of Coleridge's rigidity stem perhaps from the fact that, between Pater and Coleridge, there is more commerce than at first apparent. Indeed, one of the few consistent threads through Pater's work is his return to this Romantic notion of the autonomous genius.[27] If the power of the genius resides in an ahistorical position, then the mind that exercises this "supreme intellectual dexterity" is justification enough for such stubbornness. In this way, then, Coleridge's stubborn reliance on absolute truth is, for Pater, not an important failure. Since the genius is defined in part by its

autonomy from history, the genius does not, finally, have to answer for his absolutist position in a relativist world.

Nonetheless, the modern scholar's supposed resistance to reconciliation played against this forced reconciliation is what produces Pater's reconciliation of the two in the Pico essay. He begins by de-emphasizing his critique of the Renaissance scholars through appeals to the human imagination, which for Pater is the foundation upon which genius is constructed. To a certain extent, then, his reconciliation has already occurred:

> . . . the allegorical interpretation of the fifteenth century has its interest. With its strange web of imagery, its quaint conceits, its unexpected combinations and subtle moralising, it is an element in the local colour of a great age. It illustrates also the faith of that age in all oracles, its desire to hear all voices, its generous belief that nothing which had ever interested the human mind could wholly lose its vitality. (27)

It would be easy--too easy--to read this quote as an example of yet another one of the Paterian "strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours" that he identifies in the infamous Conclusion. Doing so ignores the careful processes of which this quote is the culmination. This aesthetic appeal is not just some hedonist response to the "strange" texts produced in the Renaissance. For Pater, this "strange web of imagery" is both the rhetorical product of his reconciliation in the essay, and the historical product that forms Pico's appeal. What provides the basis of this reconciliation, what produces this "strange web of

imagery," is what Pater refers to as "human imagination." If, by Pater's estimation, we can identify the reconciliation of discourses at the point where they "originate" in the mind, then what remains is the same generative mechanism to which Pater will consistently return.[28] Although Pater seems to imply that this mechanism is the same for everyone--Hegel, Renan, Renaissance scholars, himself, us--this reconciliation of representations of "minds" demands closer scrutiny.[29]

From Hegel, Pater appropriates the notion of the autonomous mind:

> As mind is free, its manifestation is to *set forth* Nature as *its* world; but because it is a reflection, it, in thus setting forth its world, at the same time *presupposes* the world as a nature independently existing. (Philosophy of Mind 18)

As Pater argues in "Winckelmann," the mind has the ability generate religions, or any kind of discourse, because it is at once a "reflection" and "independent," separate from the contaminations of materiality and time. While Pater may be more concerned, in "Pico Della Mirandola," with the texts that these minds have produced, he nonetheless aligns himself with the "generous belief" that "nothing that has ever interested the human mind could wholly lose it vitality." In this way, he both endorses and checks the Hegelianism implicit in such a statement. The texts are what Pater discusses here; it is the historical, not the metaphysical mind that interests him.[30] In describing this

historically specific mind, however, he implicitly endorses a historically transcendent mind: once the infinite (mind) has touched the finite (texts), then those texts somehow take on this perpetual "vitality." In other words, by virtue of their interface with the mind, texts are implicated in this transcendence of history.

Characteristically, Pater's endorsement of the historically transcendent mind is nonetheless a guarded one. As we have seen with Duke Carl interaction with the Conrad Celtes volume, this perpetual textual "vitality" manifests its power in deceptive ways. Whereas the reader in this endorsement may seem to participate in this ahistorical communication of minds, relying on such a communication with metaphysical certainty opens one up to the kinds of mistakes that Duke Carl inevitably makes.

Pater is strongly influenced by Renan, for whom the human mind has similar pretensions to the historically transcendent. In his preface to *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, Renan justifies his attention to ancient religious history by de-emphasizing political or doctrinal concerns, and by describing the power implied in the human mind as more important than its pragmatic applications:

> But the moment that we admit that the history of the human mind is the greater reality open to our investigation, all attempts to illuminate a corner of the past take on significance and value. It is, in a sense, more important to know that the human mind has pondered a problem, than its having actually produced an opinion about the problem; for, when even the question itself is unsolvable,

> the ability of the human mind to resolve it constitutes an experimental fact that is interesting in itself. (ix; my translation)

Paradoxically, then, history is the record of a mind that is autonomous from the very history that seeks to document it. While ancient politics, says Renan, may "no longer have anything to do with us," the fact that the mind is forever present in these politics justifies our attention. For Pater, the mind is nearly inseparable from its textual consumption. Similarly, for Renan, the human mind in action--for example, its ability to resolve unsolvable questions--justifies its own study.

But while there may be sufficient evidence to "reconcile," at least provisionally, Hegel's, Renan's, and Pater's construction of the mind on the grounds of its autonomy from history, such positions are more difficult to square with Pater's representation of Renaissance scholarship. The "mind" behind this scholarship is not defined past the tacit assumption that it is constructed by the same kinds of intellectual curiosity that serve each epoch that Pater discusses. Since for the Pater the mind is constructed by its practice, he defines instead by example.

Nonetheless, Pater claims that the fifteenth-century and modern minds discover an odd reconciliation, despite the strangeness encountered in their historical difference:

> And yet to read a page of one of Pico's forgotten books is like a glance into one of those ancient sepulchres, upon which the wanderer in classical lands has sometimes stumbled, with the old disused

> ornaments and furniture of a world wholly unlike ours still fresh in them. (32-3)

The "freshness" of these antiquities is produced from historical difference, from the strangeness that such artifacts take on against the backdrop of modern perspective, and Pater outlines how completely different Pico's constructions are from his own. The modern "conception of nature, with its unlimited space, its innumerable suns" contrasts sharply from Pico's where the "world is a limited place, bounded by actual crystal walls, and a material firmament . . . " (32). "Fresh," dependent as it is on difference, is neither autonomous nor new. This "freshness" is thus the paradoxical reconciliation of these historical differences where no standard reconciliation takes place. They are "reconciled" insofar as they are placed side-by-side for our scrutiny. In Hegelian terms, *Aufhebung* never occurs.

Pater's previous attempt to reconcile the modern and Renaissance scholar may, at first glance, seem homologous to this non-reconciliation. What has, after all, been produced in the essay's original dialectic--Pater's notion of the autonomous mind--has actually been carried through, and thus transcended, all three steps of that dialectic. At the same time, then, that Pater is aware of and illustrates the problems of reconciliation, he himself reconciles conflicting discourses, as we have seen, by his provisional use of a transcendent. At each point, in Pater, where there

appear to be opposites, say in the relative/absolute dichotomy illustrated in his essay on Coleridge, difference is problematized by this appeal to the autonomous mind, whether it be in the guise of the Hegelian *Geist* or in the Romantic notion of the genius.

III

Questions of reconciliation, especially the problems surrounding paradox reconciliations, find their most complete enactment in the imaginary portrait "Denys L'Auxerrois." Pater employs a figure, Denys, to represent the village's collective anxiety to bring back a "golden age" or, in other terms, to reconcile a state of pagan naivete with the complexities of contemporary society. The portrait of Denys, or Dionysus, here represented by a villager's speculation when this "golden age" had soured, is a homology for the various forms that reconciliation takes in this story:

> The wise monk Hermes bethought him of certain old readings in which the Wine-God, whose part Denys had played so well, had his contrast, his dark or antipathetic side; was like a double creature, of two natures, difficult or impossible to harmonize. (66)

Representing the village, Denys' two sides juxtapose instead of harmonize. As a result, strange societal repercussions ensue, such as "certain women who had drowned, in mere wantonness, their newborn babes. A girl with child was found hanged by her own act in a dark cellar" (66). These deaths occur at the point when, like the two-sided Denys,

the town shifts from a collective "natural" naivete to a state of knowledge and skepticism. Denys, who in his innocent phase had once been seen "[l]eaping in among the timid children" (58), is now hunted down "when the guilt of a murder, committed with a great vine-axe far out among the vineyards, was attributed vaguely to him . . . " (67). Indeed, even the town's "fine and abundant wine [that] was to be found stored up even in poor men's cottages" (57) has now both literally and metaphorically "soured in the cup" (67).

What may have at first seemed to be a forced reconciliation (the "golden age" completely replacing the village's contemporary one) now becomes a paradox reconciliation. Although the text is explicit in pointing out how the two sides of both Denys and the village cannot be mediated in terms of compatibility, the juxtaposition of these two sides have nonetheless produced a kind of reconciliation. These two sides, never to merge, remain in a state of combat, the results of which are, at least in terms of this portrait, violent. To save his own life Denys himself attempts to disappear, or blend, into the village by joining a monastery and donning a hairshirt. This attempt to merge, however, is subverted by the very signifiers that define it. The hairshirt scratches his skin and draws a telltale trickle of blood, which the villagers intuitively seem to know belongs to Denys:

> . . . [Denys'] body, now borne along in front of the crowd, was tossed hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb. The men stuck little shreds of his flesh, or, failing that, of his torn raiment, into their caps; the women lending their long hairpins for that purpose. (76)

Several layers and kinds of reconciliations structure this portrait, and Denys' murder is a reconciliation is achieved through force, not through paradox.

Although Pater employs the rhetoric of the body to give his portrait a kind of physical presence, we might imagine the action of the story to be the embodiment of a reading wherein the anxiety of reconciling disparate discourses is acted out and finally gives way to this forced reconciliation. The motivating question for this reading would be: "How can we reconcile ancient texts with modern ones?" or "How can we reconcile texts that appeal to a hedonism with texts that based themselves on 'reason'?" The answer--again, using the body as, quite literally, an embodiment of reconciliatory desire--is the same as it is in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold": such a coercive reading is produced by and results in violence. Within this imagined reading, we might conceive that the endings for both portraits serve as Paterian answers to those who consider reading light, inconsequential business.

Indeed, the portrait of Denys L'Auxerrois itself is based on such a reading. The narrator of the story, who identifies himself only as "I," has his curiosity sparked by a section of stained glass that represents a fragment of a

narrative, in stained glass and tapestry, that hangs in its entirety in a nearby church. The imaginary portrait that emerges is this narrator's reading of this tapestry and stained glass. What motivates the reading is the representation of the figure Denys, and thus the juxtaposition that the narrator "fancies" between Denys' Dionysian age and the later age of the villagers:

> It was as if one of those fair, triumphant beings had cast in his lot with the creatures of an age later than his own, people of larger spiritual capacity and assuredly of a larger capacity for melancholy. (54)

Although the narrator refers to textual authorities other than his "fancy"--"certain notes, which lay in the priest's curious library"--the reading that he produces is an attempt to reconcile this Dionysian figure with the context in which he seems so out of place. When the reading leads to a reconciliation--or non-reconcilation--that is destructive, the narrator forces one of his own by resurrecting textually the figure of Denys. After stating, at the end, that "the figure in the stained glass explained *itself*" (emphasis added), he forces both Denys's into several historical contexts:

> To me, Denys seemed to have been a real resident at Auxerre. On days of a certain atmosphere, when the trace of the Middle Age comes out, like old marks in the stones in rainy weather, I seemed actually to have seen the tortured figure there--to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets. (77)

Thus, the story ends in a flurry of reconciliation: the Middle Age, which the narrator somehow has the ability to detect in the "atmosphere," is reconciled with the age in which he tells the story; his "fancy" is reconciled with the documentary evidence that enabled his reading; and the transcendent figure of Denys l'Auxerrois is reconciled in both his contemporary and Middle Age incarnations and in himself, since he still lives, in his "two natures."

That these "two natures" remain separate in a portrait that enacts issues of reconciliation testifies to the problem with standard definitions of reconciliation such as are often used in discussions of Pater. For this reason, "two natures," as it is manifested in the portrait, becomes a critical term for the problem of reconciliation. While these two natures must remain separate, their very existence consitutes the effacement of this rule. There remains, in other words, the desire, evidenced in this case by the narrator, to elide cultural and historical difference--to bring a kind of finality and certitude to something that parades the impossibility of such a thing.

To this end, Pater's narrator uses the illusory presence of the physical body to act out his reconciliatory fantasies. Recalling the reconciliation of religions discussion in "Pico Della Mirandola," the narrator uses the human body to give a kind of solidity to the religious differences between the Christian villagers and the pagan

Denys. To purge the Dionysian "evil" that Denys has brought on the town, for example, the clergy decide "piously" to exhume the body of a patron saint, and to provide "a shrine worthy of it" (68). The efficacy of this bizarre ritual to reconcile by force the pagan and the Christian is subverted by the desperate dismantling of the church floor and, finally, by the pathetic remains of the long dead saint, the figure that is to save them:

> At last from a little narrow chest, into which the remains had been almost crushed together, the bishop's red-gloved hands drew the dwindled body, shrunken inconceivably, but still with every feature of the face traceable in a sudden oblique ray of ghastly dawn" (69).

The failure of the body to provide this certitude is heralded by the sight of the body which "seemed to indeed to have cured the madness of Denys, but certainly did not restore his gaiety" (69).

This startlingly pathetic artifact of physical presence is not enough to subsume the pagan. Indeed, when the bishop comes to bless a bridge in town, they find under the rubble of the old bridge the body of a child that has been buried alive, ostensibly to "secure the safety of all who pass over" (73). This time, the body is used to juxtapose the pagan sacrifice and this Christian ceremony and the effect leads, inevitably now it seems, to mob violence as Denys is recognized in the crowd.

In both of these examples, as in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" and elsewhere, Pater occupies a dual position

with his use of the body: the body is first presented as "fact"--a presence whose very physicality is supposed to fix it either chronologically or culturally; this position is then undermined by the realization, usually by those who react to the body, that this "fact" is subject to the same signification as other texts, is as "palimpsestic" as the history of readings of the stained glass and tapestry that Pater's narrator reads at Auxerre, is as double in "nature" as Denys himself. If we apply this reading to, say, the saint's body, then the villagers' expectations of physical certitude are subverted by the fact that the results of the unearthing do not provide definitive results.

It should not surprise us to see Flavian in Marius the Epicurean wrestling with the very problems of reconciliation faced by the narrator in "Denys l'Auxerrois." In the process of reflecting on historical recovery and judgment, Flavian wonders:

> Had there been really bad ages in art or literature? Were all ages, even those earliest, adventurous, matutinal days, in themselves equally poetical or unpoetical; and poetry, the literary beauty, the poetic ideal, always but a borrowed light upon men's actual life? (91)

The opposition that informs this musing exists between the absolute/relative standards of judgment that Pater discusses in his essay on Coleridge. Flavian's anxiety in reconciling these two schools, or rather trying to locate the point at which one can displace the other, is a familiar one for Pater.

Perhaps what is more interesting about this passage, however, are the other oppositions that are implicated, but not directly addressed, here. As in "Denys," the questions that Flavian raises are based on an infancy/adult opposition. What is hard for Flavian to reconcile is that "even those earliest, adventurous, matutinal" ages could somehow be "equal" to the ages that have followed from it.[31] That is, both of these oppositions depend upon a standard of judgment that is outside the oppositions--an exteriority that the questions themselves declare impossible.

Finally, there is more to Pater's proclivity to juxtapose, or to defer a reconciliation of closure, than merely a desire "to leave things open." To defer closure, or perhaps *Aufhebung*, is an attempt to take a "no-position" position, that by presenting and juxtaposing, one somehow escapes the confinement of cultural politics. When we examine what, in fact, is being "left open" or what the act of "leaving open" entails, then it becomes fairly clear that to do so is itself an exercise of power. In other words, the political cannot be deferred; reconciliations will always take place. This attempt indefinitely to keep the political off guard--as if politics only came in *ex post facto*--is a maneuver in another direction from the one we will discuss in the next section, where Pater "collapses"

the political or historical into what he perceives is the autonomous aesthetic.

Collapse

I

We have seen Pater's keen awareness of, and facility with, questions of historical mediation; we have even seen him, in his discussion of Plato, imply that the historical reading is the only "really critical study"; and finally, as discussed in the two previous sections, we have seen him meticulously consider and illustrate the implications of a historical inquiry in his imaginary portraits and elsewhere. To what extent, however, are these considerations troubled by Pater's frequent reversion to what has been seen as an autonomous, immediate aesthetic? Are there problems with a position that stakes out a critique whose assumptions are undermined by the occupation of another contradictory position? What can we say, in other words, about such intellectual duplicity?

Any extensive historical "definition" of the term "aesthetic" would require a broader study than the one I pursue here.[32] Similarly, dispatching the Paterian aesthetic in a sentence or two serves neither Pater's work nor my own. Thus, I defer from defining that term at this point, replacing the need to define-by-criteria with questions and emphases that Pater's use of the aesthetic raises. How I use the term "aesthetic" is therefore not an

attempt to apply my own *a priori* definition to Pater's work, but to gather other uses of the term and the questions it raises as a backdrop for what it is that we call Pater's aesthetic.

Is it even possible, however, to postpone defining the word "collapse," suggesting as it does not only action, but a specific kind of action? When we couple it with the word "into," as I have done in the title, this action becomes a model for the kinds of reconciliation we discussed in the last section. If we retain the word "collapse" within this model, the aesthetic becomes an overpowering force to the historical. If I were consistently to read this model as an example of a forced reconciliation then the presence of historical considerations in Pater's aesthetic would be little more than perfunctory one.

Such extremes are clearly not the case, however; there can always be found traces of the "historical" in Pater's aesthetic, as well as evidence of the "aesthetic" in his historicism.[33] Although carefully plotted historical considerations often seem completely undercut by aesthetic ones, this is not to say that such a maneuver is absolute or final, or even that one realm wields more power than the other. Instead, as I define it, "collapse" is, despite its sound of finality, provisional. My concern with "collapse," in other words, is the evaluation of a tendency, rather than the charting of a rule.

When I say that the historical collapses into the aesthetic, I do not mean that the work of the aesthetic in Pater is simply to "transcend" historical considerations. Although such a collapse implies a transcendence, in Pater, the act of transcendence is itself produced from historical considerations. This is not to say that Pater is unwittingly historical, only that in the examples that I will examine, this "collapse" is produced after and as a result of meticulously situating his own reading. If, for example, we return to that section in Pico Della Mirandola, we see that Pater constructs a historical framework to build up to what he finds intellectually inferior but, finally, more aesthetically interesting in fifteenth-century studies of religion. His collapse into the aesthetic from the historical is marked fairly clearly: "And yet as a curiosity of the human mind . . . " (R 27). His "and yet" here and elsewhere implies a radical shift in emphasis: a curiosity, in Pater, is always more highly prized than a fastidious or "antiquarian" scholarship. In this case, this privileging of the "curious" is produced from a historical framework (both the "modern" approach and Pater's own). We cannot, therefore, write this collapse off as the mere will to transcendence, even though, it can be argued, that this will is Pater's impetus here. Although Paterian desire is motivated by the possibility, however vague, that these historical leaps of faith may be productive, he approaches

this desire like the capable and skeptical scholar that he is. Perhaps it is for this reason that Pater was so hurt by the Conclusion controversy: the essays in The Renaissance are hardly hedonistic free associations. Indeed, they are produced well within the rhetorical protocol expected of any Oxford don.

One of the conflicts in this argument may already be evident. If Pater employs the aesthetic to transcend history, does that not conflict with when, such as in "Pico," he demonstrates the historicity of the aesthetic? Is the historical, in Pater, a rhetorical device that he jettisons after its use has passed? Wolfgang Iser answers these questions by arguing that history and art in Pater are symbiotic:

> Thus Pater's concept of art received its legitimation from history, which he saw not as a movement towards perfection, but as a continual series of changes in which reality broke up into contrasts, which were then blended together by art. (The Aesthetic Moment 81)

Iser's description is a model of this collapse: historical flux is healed by art, whose very ability to do so bespeaks its transcendence. Art's ability to still these waters has more, perhaps, to do with Iser than Pater, however. Iser speaks of art as he might expect Pater to: as if it had some sort of constancy to it, as if there were something free from historical contingency that we could recognize as art.

I point this out because I believe that Pater is well aware of the problems with discussing art in the abstract.

When he does so, he undercuts the abstraction with an example. Using an example also allows him to enter his "response" which, as most definitions imply, is the basis of the aesthetic. If we shift, then, from art to response, we can examine just how broadly Pater defines "art" and how difficult it is to corral everything--"strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odors" as well as architecture, painting, biography, politics, the self--under the generic "art." Pater, then,--at least tacitly by example--implicates history in the very aesthetic that he sees as constant in the human mind.

If, as I have pointed out, the aesthetic in Pater is, in some measure, historically determined, can these two realms be reconciled? Not, as we have seen, in the traditional sense of the term, and Pater answers this question by importing the Hegelian model of historical division. Each discipline, Pater claims, travels by "unconnected roads":

> As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other, but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. (R xxiii-iv)

Pater acknowledges that these separated disciplines may have occasional and "unconscious" associations, but what commerce

there may be between them is largely inconsequential. Pater does not favor this intellectual isolationism, and its absence in the Renaissance is what, in fact, interests him. There are times, however, when these disciplines merge or, we might say, collapse:

> There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. (xxiv)

One of these ages is, of course, the Renaissance, an intellectually idyllic time, when "artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thought" (xxiv). Although Pater is characteristically ambiguous about his definition of this "general culture," we may be sure that all the disciplines implicated in this combination are bonded to each other by their mutual "curiosity"; Pater says that what characterizes isolationism is that the branches of knowledge are "generally little curious of the thoughts of others."

But what kind of "curiosity" is this, and what happens when these "many interests" are said to "combine"? Although I am sure that this description of Pater's does not mean that, say, painting subsumes sculpture which subsumes religion which subsumes philosophy, his enthusiasm for this "re-birth" of intellectual curiosity nonetheless indicates

his willingness to relax, or collapse, for the sake of curiosity, what are to him the traditional boundaries between areas of knowledge. As evidenced in "Pico" and elsewhere, "curiosity" in Pater is no trivial matter. In this case, it has the power to collapse or erase boundaries between realms of knowledge. Thus, the criticism that Pater's use of curiosity is patently apolitical depends on a system wherein politics is reduced to a neatly cordoned and circumscribed function.

II

The controversy over Pater's famous Conclusion, and its subsequent suppression by Pater, has been well-documented.[34] The Conclusion appeared in the first edition, was omitted in the second, and re-appeared in the 1893 edition with the following *caveat* by Pater:

> This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in Marius the Epicurean with the thoughts suggested by it. (186)

Most of the contemporary criticism of The Renaissance dwells upon the Conclusion and its exhortation toward an aestheticized *carpe diem*, which even drew the notice of George Eliot, who was moved to write to John Blackwood to praise Blackwood's review of The Renaissance, a book that to Eliot was "quite poisonous in its false principles of

criticism and false conceptions of life" (Letters, V: 455). "Poisonous" and especially "dangerous" are the kinds of words that litter the reactions to the Conclusion, and without too much argument we could imagine that such reactions would be justification enough for the naturally shy Pater to omit the Conclusion in the second edition.

On the other hand, if we look at the Conclusion in the context of the collapsing boundaries that Pater praises as indicative of the Renaissance in his Preface, then this "second guessing" may have other grounds. Although the chapters of The Renaissance advocate a kind of *l'art pour l'art*, they are, for the most part, examples of a meticulous, if inconsistent, scholarship. In them, Pater reads specific texts: paintings (readings of which have also touched off their own controversy),[35] architecture, and the figures who produce this work. Of the eight first edition chapters, one had appeared in Westminster Review and four had appeared in Fortnightly Review. When Pater assembled his book, he added the Conclusion, which had first appeared in his review, "Poems by William Morris," in the Westminster Review. Of this review--which, we might add, is also a reading of specific texts--Pater says that what would come to be known as the Conclusion is the product of a "strange transition from the earthly paradise [a pun perhaps on the Morris poem by the same name] to the sad-coloured world of abstract philosophy" ("Poems" 309). As it appears in both

the review and the book, the Conclusion is something quite apart from the readings that it serves to "conclude." It is apparent that Pater is not merely "concluding" his volume's scholarly proceedings.

From his loose definition of the Renaissance in the Preface to the careful historical constructions of "Pico Della Mirandola" to the guarded praise of Winckelmann's obsessive scholarship, the business of The Renaissance is to identify boundaries, to distinguish between this approach and that one, to mark the differences between schools of painting. The project of Pater's Conclusion is at once a reversal and continuation of this project: it serves to erase, or reduce, those boundaries into a realm of sensation that he indicates is pre-linguistic and is thus pre-historical and pre-cultural:

> And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. (187)

"Our consciousness," or the point at which we erect those boundaries, is what nullifies these sensations. In this "narrow chamber" of the mind, the individual is a "prisoner," condemned, it seems, to producing magnificent edifices inspired by, but never equalling the power of, these primal sensations. Pater invokes Hugo to underscore this notion of being "condemned" both to living under the

spectre of death and to living that "short day of frost and sun" inside our own minds: *les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis.* Itself constructed as the ultimate barrier, the mind's task, says Pater, is to secure that which does not remind it of its own confinement, to draw from the source, to "[get] as many pulsations as possible into the given time" (190).

As it was manifested in the Conclusion controversy, this collapse into what Pater sees as the basis of aesthetic response threatens to remove even more boundaries than Pater himself was comfortable with removing. To a certain extent, then, his critics' reaction reaffirmed or reminded Pater that what he proposed was a project that he could not carry out, intellectually (as, perhaps, Huysmans did) or socially (as Wilde certainly did). But then again, the critics were also mistaken in their accusations of an unrestrained hedonism. After all, was he not talking in terms of "abstract philosophy," as he called it? "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy" was not exactly a call to arms, was it? Undeniably, it was not his intention to "mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall" (186), or to threaten his position at Brasenose.

At any rate, the complaints of those who railed against the Conclusion could be explained by the argument that they had somehow missed his "original meaning" as Pater calls it.

Pater is to have said of these critics: "I wish they wouldn't call me 'a hedonist'; it produces such a bad effect on the minds of people who don't know Greek" (Gosse 258). Although this retort sounds more like Wilde than Pater, his omission and subsequent "revision" of the Conclusion indicates that he wished to call his critics on the very scholarly grounds from which the Conclusion seems to depart. All this "revision" consisted of was the insertion of a few interruptory clauses, and the rewording of a sentence or two.[36]

Nonetheless, the Conclusion was reinstalled more or less intact with the warning that the views therein are "dealt [with] more fully in Marius the Epicurean," the impetus for which was at least in part the reaction that the Conclusion elicited. Interestingly enough, the quest for sensation advocated in the Conclusion is rendered in Marius the Epicurean in terms of intellectual, rather than sensory, curiosity, and in the establishment and definition of boundaries between bodies of knowledge, as some of the chapter titles attest: "'The Religion of Numa,'" "New Cyrenaiscism," "Stoicism at Court," and "Two Curious Houses." The movement, that in the Conclusion collapses the structures that imprison sensation, is replaced in Marius by a meticulous reading of these structures which passes over instead of destroying them.

The sensory "curiosity" of the Conclusion and the intellectual "curiosity" of Marius the Epicurean, however, meet in Pater's emphasis on the subject that experiences these pursuits. Like the narrator of "Denys l'Auxerrois" who finally negotiates these "two natures" by collapsing them into the supernatural, the reading subject both personalizes and historicizes in the act of reading. In both curiosities the aesthetic acts as mediator between the historical and the subject. The Conclusion, for example, bears an epigraph from Heraclitus, repeated by Socrates and recorded in Plato's Cratylus. In Plato and Platonism (1893), Pater himself translates this saying to mean "All things give way: nothing remaineth" (14). Following this epigraph in the Conclusion is a statement that puts this notion of collapse into the context of contemporary scholarship: "To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought" (186). With this juxtaposition of citation and reading, Pater accomplishes at least two ends: he uses the historical juxtaposition to construct his sensation thesis. What others may read as an appeal to hedonism, in other words, he shows here to be historically produced, a result of millennia of historical processes; on the other hand, he also uses this historical construction to deflate or collapse, Arnold-like, those same historical processes. Heraclitus, in other words, speaks of the same

nihilism thousands of years ago that the survivors of so many blows against epistemological certitude in the nineteenth century think is unique to them.

If the "solutions" in the Conclusion are motivated by this desire for certitude, by this hope that there is a mutual grounding for history, culture, and reality, then in both of the cases above the result is a collapse of history. In this way, the uniquely relativistic tendency of mid-nineteenth century historical discourse plays right into history's own collapse into the aesthetic: If historical reality can be known only through the conditions of its production, then can not the same thing be true for subjective reality? Is not the world, after all, a conglomeration of subjects speaking, but never really understanding, each other? And, finally, what can we really count on besides our own sensory response to what is around us? Not only does the aesthetic act as mediator between history and the subject but, in this case, the aesthetic and the subject are inseparable. If the basis for the aesthetic is sensory response, and the senses reside within the subject, then one cannot talk about one with implicating the other.

If this strangely physical description of the aesthetic disturbs us, then we should remember that the aesthetic began in its original construction by Alexander Baumgarten as a "discourse of the body":

> . . . the term refers not in the first place to art, but, as the Greek *aisthesis* would suggest, to the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarified domain of conceptual thought. The distinction which the term 'aesthetic' initially enforces in the mid-eighteenth century is not one between 'art' and 'life', but between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, that which is bound up with our creaturely life as opposed to that which conducts some shadowy existence in the recesses of the mind. (Eagleton 13)

At first glance, such an "aesthetic" would seem to describe the Pater of the Conclusion. It would certainly not be difficult to read the Conclusion as a reversion to the physical, a retreat from the various and conflicting "mind-forg'd manacles" that assault us from the world of the intellect. As we have seen in the exhumed corpses in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" and "Denys l'Auxerrois," Pater often proffers a body to testify physically to what the intellect cannot.

On the other hand, we should also remember that perceptions of the body, at least for the Pater of the Conclusion, extend beyond its confines. Pater's "strange transition," for instance, "from the earthly paradise [of Morris' poetry] to the sad-coloured world of abstract philosophy" is a movement that seems to reverse this "tyranny of the senses," or of the body. This "reversal" of the "original" aesthetic opposition, however, is not supported, in Pater, by a rigid bifurcation of the body and the intellect. Instead, this distinction between physical

and intellectual reaction is more often than not connected, if not reconciled, in Pater. The first "concrete" example that Pater cites in the Conclusion, for instance, seems, at first glance, to be located solely in the bodily realm. Instead, he depends on our own bodily memory, addressing the reader in the implied second person imperative and, with this appeal, breaks his own "tyranny of the senses":

> Let us begin with that which is without--our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat (186).

While such a vivid illustration seems almost self-evidently bodily, Pater immediately undercuts this assumption by showing connections outside of the body, and by doing so problematizes the solipsism for which he is so often accused.

In the Winckelmann chapter preceding this Conclusion, Pater addresses the limits of the historical and aesthetic body. In Greek thought, for instance, Pater tells us that

> lordship gives authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet; inanimate nature in thrown into the background. But just there Greek thought finds its happy limit; it *has not yet learned* to boast of its independence of the flesh; the spirit has not yet absorbed everything with its emotions, nor reflected its own colour everywhere. (164; emphasis added)

Pater speaks here with historical discernment: the point is not that the Greeks have not learned the truth of the independence of the mind, but that, at least historically, such a modification had not taken place. Indeed, we can

assume, Pater says, that "the mind itself has had an historical development . . . " (167). But if the mind is susceptible to historical permutation, the idealized male body of sculpture certainly is not:

> That white light, purged from the angry, bloodlike stains of action and passion, reveals, not what is accidental in man, but the tranquil godship in him, as opposed to the restless accidents of life. (170)

As careful as Pater is in outlining, historicizing and, thus, distancing himself from the ideal in Greek art, he is clearly seduced by it. Later in the essay, he reacts similarly, prefacing his reaction with the claim that if "a single product only of Hellenic art were to be saved in the wreck of all," he would choose this one, the Panathenaic frieze. His reading is rife with absolutes that trouble again his previous historical situating of the ideal in Greek art:

> This colourless, unclassified purity of life, with its blending and interpenetration of intellectual, spiritual, and physical elements, still folded together, pregnant with the possibilities of a whole world closed within it, is the highest expression of the indifference which lies beyond all that is relative or partial. (174)

A good distance from his previous definition of classifications and boundaries in this essay and elsewhere, "purity" and "wholeness" now lie in direct opposition to "classification" and "relativity" and "partialness." Transcendence and historicity, at this point, could not be more separate.

And we might want to leave the reading right there, if it were not for the fact that Pater had implied in this same essay that art was subject both to history and politics. One possible reason for this shift in methodology is in the power with which Pater invests aesthetic response. History and politics, the slow processes of culture, and the limitations they bring with them, are carefully considered and even endorsed--until, that is, we meet the undeniable power of aesthetic response, a power seemingly so unrestrained and immediate that it seems alterior to history.

Later in the same essay, Pater argues that the "spectator's" response to art can also be a means to escape what he calls "'the tyranny of the senses'," that the art object can serve as a target for sensory overflow, this "turbid fever" (176). Pater uses this same phrase several years later in "The Child in the House"--generally assumed to be autobiographical[37]--when he discusses the force of Florian's reaction to some red flowers that he remembers:

> the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him . . . of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him. (MS 186)

Taken together, the two uses of this "tyranny" are contradictory: Pater implies in the Winckelmann essay that aesthetic response relieves some of the urgency of this constant state of sensory crisis, almost as if the object of

the response were a reservoir for this glut of sensation; the sensual tyranny of "The Child in the House," though, is precipitated by aesthetic response. In both examples, however, this "tyranny" clearly implicates a politics, or at least employs a political model. In both instances, this tyranny of the senses--a phrase nearly impossible to divide from its political resonances--is hardly "shameless and childlike," as Pater describes Greek sensuousness. There is a kind of panic suggested in both, a desire to be free from this hold and, in Florian's case, a corresponding desire to turn the tables and "possess" the object of his aesthetic irritation.

The danger of this sensual tyranny, as we will see in Chapter Four, is counteracted in Pater by a reliance on a studied disinterest and asceticism. Nonetheless, there is clearly more at stake in this bodily reaction to art. As Pater states in the Conclusion, what conspires to make up our body and its reactions reaches beyond the flesh with amazing force and dexterity:

> Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements ar broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of the ten thousand resultant combinations. (186)

Aesthetic perception can no longer be confined to the body itself, and the fact that it does extend into the "world" means that we must now take how these "responses" are

disseminated--or how these responses are extended--into consideration. We must consider them in terms of their political and historical significance.

In this respect, what we may perceive as Pater's collapse of history into the aesthetic may not be a collapse after all. When Pater says, then, near the end of the Winckelmann essay, that poetry is "all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form, as distinct from its matter" (184), he relies on a vaguely Arnoldian model of disinterest where politics, history, is somehow separate from what signifies it. Instead, Pater must find a way to describe the significant gesture of power that aesthetic response clearly is. Trying to escape that "matter," however, paradoxically turns Pater back into the very "tyranny" of the body that he wants to escape.

III

Death in Pater tends to be violent.[38] The trampling of Duke Carl and his bride, the mutilation of Denys L'Auxerrois, and even the delicate rendering of Winckelmann's murder, to name a few such deaths, all testify to Pater's almost ritualistic destruction of the body that he invests with so much power--almost as if the final and decisive blow of tyranny were dealt to the senses themselves. Marius' death, on the other hand, is by all accounts a peaceful one. He dies in bed, gently musing over the pieces of "revelation" that are gradually dispensed to

him. The body, in this case, is not rent into shreds, but becomes "that dear sister and companion of his soul, outworn, suffering, and in the very article of death, as it was now" (ME 295-6).

Even a bodily conception this emotionally removed, however, must square with a life dedicated to sensation, must address this death of the senses and thus of the power the senses wield:

> Yet now, aware still in that suffering body of such vivid powers of mind and sense, as he anticipated from time to time how his sickness . . . was likely to end, and that the moment of taking final account was drawing very near, a consciousness of waste would come, with half-angry tears of self-pity, in his great weakness--a blind, outraged, angry feeling of wasted power . . . . (294)

To a world and a persona constructed by the senses and their power, the spectre of approaching impotence is indeed a thing to be feared.

But what is the target for this "anger," this "outrage," and these "feelings of wasted power"? Perhaps the answer may lie in the fact that this sensory power and response, this construction of the aesthetic, has defined itself in terms of its transcendence from history, from the body's own ability to establish connections and extend beyond itself, from the senses' paradoxical power to produce a response so powerful that corporeality and temporality have no hold on them. In what may be the most important Paterian death, then, what we have is the body and its

aesthetic confronting history, confronting the paradox of a discourse that enlists the senses to extend beyond the body completely written in history.

This is not simply a matter of the aesthetic's pretense of transcending history showing itself to be, finally, an illusion, so that now history may come again in glory to reclaim that which was taken from it. Such a reading must also assume that the power of the senses was always fundamentally nonexistent, and such is clearly not the case. What we have instead is Pater's attempt to reconcile the aesthetic with the historical. As we have seen, such reconciliations are neither easy nor particularly harmonious, and here Marius' uses his own death to separate the acts of watching and of experiencing death. His

> final account was drawing very near, a consciousness of waste would come, with half-angry tears of self-pity, in his great weakness--a blind, outraged, angry feeling of wasted power, such as he might have experienced himself standing by the deathbed of another, in condition like his own.
>
> And yet it was the fact, again, that the vision of men and things, actually revealed to him on his way through the world, had developed, with a wonderful largeness, the faculties to which it addressed itself, his general capacity of vision; (294)

Once again, the Paterian "and yet" reverses at the same time it endorses.

Even if, in the case of Marius' death, the discourse of the senses is squelched by a body that cannot afford to transcend history, the senses remain autonomous elsewhere in

Pater. This "collapse" into the aesthetic, in other words, may be refined to mean only one, but decisive and powerful, side of an oscillation. What others describe as Pater's "aesthetic historicism" is, in fact, this oscillation, this constant checking of one discourse by the other. "Aesthetic historicism," then, is a misnomer, in that this dialectic between the historical and the aesthetic does not produce a third term that is an amalgam of the first two. As seen in the section on reconciliation, there are some mergers that cannot be maintained.

When Pater discusses the issue of context in the Winckelmann essay, he addresses the "separateness" of these discourses: "But besides these conditions of time and place, and independent of them, there is also an element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses" (158-9). This "element of permanence" is not only "beside" these "conditions of time and place"; it nullfies them. It is difficult to advocate a contingency (he says just before this sentence that the genius "works ever" under these conditions) at the same time that that same genius also claims a "permanence." In this instance, then, the historical does indeed collapse into the aesthetic.

Again, I do not mean to suggest that this collapse is somehow an unwitting one on Pater's part. Indeed, Pater might well propose that the historical and aesthetic are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that the necessity of

keeping the two separate may merely be a case of "intellectual pride." I refer to one of the more curious chapters of Marius the Epicurean, "Second Thoughts," when Pater describes Marius and the Cyrenaic philosophers and their conflict between this "immediate" sensual and aesthetic knowledge and any doctrine that might contradict it:

> . . . they paid a great price for them [these moments of immediate sensation], in the sacrifice of a thousand possible sympathies, of things only to be enjoyed through sympathy, from which they detached themselves, in intellectual pride, in loyalty to a mere theory that would take nothing for granted, and assent to no approximate or hypothetical truths. (185)

Although it would be fallacious to insert "historicism" as this "mere theory," Pater speaks of this intellectual rigidity as something that the student dedicated to self-education--such as Marius, Coleridge, and Winckelmann--must eventually get past. Pater, in other words, sees the historical as another in a great array of reading methodologies, and the fact that this methodology conflicts with another is matter for reconciliation. If the reader or philosopher relies on a completely rigid definition of reconciliation--one in which either two differing philosophies must either remain completely separate or completely apart--then, as Pater might say, we are stuck in the Cyrenaic quandary, the price for which is that we must do without other possibilities.

In this situation, this collapse into the aesthetic--and, more crucially, the willingness and commitment that motivates this collapse--enables both anachronism and the various modes of reconciliation. That is, at the expense of a Cyrenaician "intellectual purity," this desire to subvert the doctrinal creates a movement in which more possibilities may be exercised. If we go back to that section of "Pico Della Mirandola," where Pater severely problematizes Renaissance historical inquiry to the point where it is no longer intellectually tenable, the "And yet" that follows this critique signifies this movement to subvert the doctrinal; it marks a willingness to accept and propose other readings. Like Derrida's notion of writing *sous rature*, where the problems are "marked out" but remain on the page, Pater as reader keeps reading. The reading, in other words, is always more important than what is read.

Notes

1. The term "culture" is a problematic one in any context, and I mean to distinguish Pater's use of it from our postmodern one. Pater draws upon the Arnoldian model of culture, but with an important distinction: he clearly implicates a historically determined notion of culture. That is, his entire point with this portrait is to discuss how culture is historically constructed at the very moment that it seems to transcend history. For a historical analysis of how "culture" became disseminated, see Raymond Williams' celebrated Culture and Society. For a compelling discussion of what "culture" has become in the twentieth century, see "Ethnographia Mundi" in Daniel Cottom's Text and Culture.

2. This resurrection of the Apollonian is a continual fascination of Pater's, as is his preoccupation with the Dionysian figure, particularly in "Denys L'Auxerrois." Although he apparently did not read his contemporary, an appropriate text on these two forces is Nietzsche's famous section of The Birth of Tragedy where he discusses the "reconciliation" of the Apollonian with the Dionysian.

For a list and synopsis of those works of Pater's in which this return is implicated, see Robert Peters, "The Cult of the Returned Apollo: Walter Pater's Renaissance and Imaginary Portraits."

3. As I hinted earlier in my hypothetical argument, Pater's use of the phrase "face to face" is especially interesting. Here and elsewhere, it implies both the desire for, and knowledge of the impossibility of, an immediate access to the past. Such desires are also evident in Jacob Burckhardt, Thomas Carlyle, and especially Jules Michelet, as well as others.

4. Since my emphasis here is on anachronistic maneuvers in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," constraints prevent me from discussing Pater's own free use of anachronism elsewhere, along much the same lines that he attributes to the aesthetic poet. All of Marius the Epicurean is relevant on this point, but especially the "Second Thoughts" chapter, where Pater's narrator acknowledges this "free play": "Let the reader pardon me if here and there I seem to be passing from Marius to his modern representatives--from Rome, to Paris or London" (181). See also "A Prince of Courtly Painters" where Pater's first person narrator speaks of a Revolution-era France in 1717:

> People talk of a new era now dawning upon the world, of fraternity, liberty, humanity, of a novel sort of social freedom in which men's natural goodness of heart will blossom at a thousand points hitherto repressed. (Imaginary Portraits 33)

5. The problem of "marking" narrative and historical time has, of course, produced numerous experiments and models. One of these is Mikhail Bakhtin's appropriation of the term "chronotope" (literally "space-time") from Einstein's Theory of Relativity to discuss "the process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (84). Apropos to this discussion of the Pater and the Duke, Bakhtin discusses how the chronotope applies to "the simultaneous existence in literature of phenomena taken from widely separate periods of time," a problem that "greatly complicates the historico-literary process" (85). See "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination.

6. See Konrad Celtis, Selections. A German who wrote in Latin at a time where there is "one might think, enough writing of that period in German . . . " (v), Celtes is perhaps best know for his ode--*Ars versificandi et carminum*--"inviting Phoebus to come to Germany and spread the art of song." Not only did the ode express this desire, but "made available the technical instruction for achieving this aim" (3-4).

7. It is around the time of Pater's writing of this portrait that the Eugenics Movement starts to take form in England. This movement, which would later boast such members as Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, and Alexander Graham Bell, arose out of the *fin de siècle* anxiety that the collective genetic pool had become seriously "watered down." It is not too difficult to find such anxieties, for example, in Joris-Karl Huysmans' *A rebours* (1884). For a history of the Eugenics Movement, see Lyndsay Andrew Farrall, The Origins of the English Eugenics Movement 1865-1925.

Physiology is also a recurring concern in much of Nietzsche. In The Will to Power (1889), for example, he attempts to draw connections between physical and moral pathology, and speaks of the same kind of genetic degeneration that Huysmans' Des Esseintes fears is the cause of his malady.

8. Pater refers here to Marivaux's *Annibal*, presented for the first time by Les Comèdiens Francais on 16 December, 1720. In the introduction that volume, Frèdèric Deloffre says about this play that

> [Marivaux's] principal fault, to contemporary eyes, was without a doubt the absence of all salient traits. Treating a historical subject, Marivaux has neither the taste for politics nor the dramatic sense of Corneille . . . in a period where the public is eager for new emotions, Marivaux was unable to play upon any of these provocations . . . . (118; my translation)

Although it is impossible to know whether Pater knew the contemporary reaction to the play, the introduction to the play nonetheless implies that Marivaux was trying to imitate the "voice of the ancients" (120)--much to the dismay of his contemporary audience.

9. That science proceeds thus rationally has produced numerous critiques. Although space prevents me from including anything approaching a "comprehensive" listing, "musts" include: Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), one of the first, and certainly the most famous, study to propose a role for the "non-rational" and the rhetorical in scientific inquiry; not as well-known, but crucial to Kuhn is his teacher James Conant's Science and

Common Sense (1951), a study that opens up the field of science to a historicist inquiry; also significant is Paul Feyerabend's Against Method (1975), which claims that science has always subverted the "rational method," and that science is best suited to "anarchism."

Much of Foucault is relevant on this point as well, especially his contention that we cannot talk about fields of knowledge as, such as "biology" or "history" as if they always existed. In The Order of Things (1966), for instance, he claims that history has not always been with us, but emerges as a field of knowledge between the years 1775 and 1825 (221). See also Birth of the Clinic (1963), and Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), among others. Jean-Francois Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979) may also be useful.

David DeLaura claims that Pater had "an unambiguous acceptance of the results and implications of contemporary science," and that he particularly embraced the "evolutionary theory" of Hegel and Darwin, for example (Hebrew and Hellene 174). Although he betrays a fascination with the critiques to which religion was subjected in the guise of science, Pater never accepts anything "unambiguously."

10. What Pater means by "German bone-science" is unclear. More than likely, he is referring to J.J. Winckelmann (1717-1768), the subject of one of Pater's essays in The Renaissance and considered by some to be one of the "founders" of what we now know as archaeology. See Winckelmann's *Geschicte der Kunst des Altermas*; Bruce G. Trigger's A History of Archaeological Thought (38-9); and C.W. Ceram's Gods, Graves, and Scholars (10-15). Since Pater's as well as my concern here is with exhumation and history, making this rather oblique reference to the author of works on the excavation of antiquities may tell us more about the connection between Pater's motives for presenting his own unearthed corpses this way and the notion that knowledge can be "uncovered."

11. In his reading of James Conant's Science and Common Sense, Robert D'Amico says that for Conant the "[h]istory of science is . . . central because the strategies by which schemes succeed, replace opponents, and become part of the common sense are not determined by logic or a direct criteria of description." To those who claim that, at the very least, the atom is evidence of reality, Conant allows only that what we call atoms "are designators within a successful framework." See D'Amico's Historicism and Knowledge (35).

12. This connection between death and the self is a recurring concern, especially in Renaissance studies. In Love in Western World, for example, Denis de Rougement talks about death and transcendence in terms of its relation to Romance:

> Why is it that we delight most of all in some tale of impossible love? Because we long for the branding; because we long to grow aware of what is on fire inside us. Suffering and understanding are deeply connected; death and self-awareness are in league. (51)

For a related, if somewhat tangential, discussion of the body and transcendence or "oblivion" see David L. Miller's The Poem's Two Bodies.

Thomas Carlyle sees this tendency in terms of self-denial, or asceticism, and says that this

> *Selbsttödtung*, Annihilation of Self, justly reckoned the beginning of all virtue: here is the highest form of it, still possible to the lowest man. The voice of Nature this, to a repentant outcast sinner turning again towards the realm of manhood;--and I understand it is the precept of all right Christianity too. ("Jesuitism," Latter-Day Pamphlets, 256)

13. In the final "frame" of the portrait, for example, Pater steps out of the carefully constructed historical problems embodied in his portrayal of the Duke and discusses Duke Carl in terms of the actual *Aufklärung* and connects the spirit of the Duke with those "other hands" who "effected" it, namely Lessing, Herder, and Goethe. Some see this framing as evidence of Pater's wholesale endorsement of Duke Carl's efforts as well as those of whom Duke Carl is most likely modeled upon, J.J. Winckelmann. Such a reading, however, necessarily overlooks the majority of the complex characterization that precedes this afterword. We should also note that twenty-one years separate Pater's "Winckelmann" essay and this imaginary portrait, and that even in the earlier essay, Pater, laudatory as he was towards Winckelmann's similar efforts to resurrect Greek culture, did not stint in his criticism.

14. Pater may be referring to the Greek nationalist revival during the 1700's, that eventually led to the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829) from the Ottoman Turks.

15. This tendency of Pater's to retreat from judgment often leaves him vulnerable to charges of relativism. Without rehearsing the problems with such a charge, or even with the very notion of relativism, I prefer to think of this tendency in relation to Foucault, who persistently attempts to shift the discourse to a point "beyond" the level of

binary judgment: instead of recoiling in horror at the description of a tortured body, for example, we treat this body as a document, and use it to discuss the "political technology of the body" (Discipline and Punish 24). When discussing his own personal interest in politics, Foucault "shifts the 'why' question to the 'how' question" (The Foucault Reader 5). These kinds of binary judgments, for Foucault, too often share the same structures as polemics, where the polemicist "proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree and will never agree to question" ("Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations," The Foucault Reader 382).

It is this hesitation to make these kinds of judgments that I see in Pater here, and even more prominently in first seven pages of Plato and Platonism. Although in Discipline and Punish Foucault "abandons the opposition between what is 'interested' and what is 'disinterested'" (28), there is more to be examined between this avoidance of judgment and Pater's notion of disinterest.

16. See Pater's "Denys L'Auxerrois," Imaginary Portraits (76-7)--as well as the essay on "Winckelmann," The Renaissance (156), and in Marius the Epicurean (168-9)--to see several examples of his attraction to violent deaths. This fascination, often accompanied by a detached, even disinterested, manner, is both physiological curiosity at the same time that it functions as the desire for unequivocal, positivistic judgment.

17. The issue of reconciliation has always been, and continues to be, a major concern in Pater studies. Gerald Monsman, for instance, speaks of Pater's desire to reconcile "the material world of 'perpetual flux' and the world of eternal rest, which is God" (Pater's Portraits xvi); Wolfgang Iser sees this desire as the generative mechanism for Pater's view of history: "Pater was careful not to impose a pattern on history. He was, rather, looking for confirmation that incompatibles can nevertheless be mediated, and this is the reason why he focused so exclusively on periods of transition. What has to be borne in mind, however, is that art for Pater resolved irreconciliabilities and thus became the paradigmatic embodiment of what transition meant to him" (81); It is precisely Pater's ability to "synthesize ideas" that F.C. McGrath, in The Sensible Spirit, sees as Pater's most important legacy to the Moderns, particularly Pater's "synthesis of empiricism and idealism" (8); Carolyn Williams sees in Pater a movement toward historical reconciliation rather than historical difference (106-7).

18. For a extended discussion of the palimpsest in the wake of contemporary French theory, see Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes* (1982), in which he speaks in terms of "hypertextuality," or "literature of the second degree, that writes itself in reading" (my translation).

19. Buckler, Walter Pater: Three Major Texts (9). Similarly, F.C. McGrath sees Pater as advancing a single vision, despite the disparateness of his reading: "Like a Hephaestus possessed with the ideal of fusing all the metal in his shop into a single work, Pater ranged from Heraclitus to Flaubert to piece together his own philosophic/aesthetic vision" (7).

20. By "standard reconciliation" I mean its common usage, which generally means "to make things compatible or consistent. We might see an example of this standard usage in Pater's discussion of Winckelmann's attraction to the male body: "These friendships, bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining his thoughts with its bloom, perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture" (152). But even here, we can see the problems with taking even this "standard" usage of the term. In this case, human bodies are "reconciled"--we might even say conflated--with their marble representations in sculpture.

21. On this point, see Terry Eagleton's Ideology of the Aesthetic (1990), where he says "That there *is* conflict is made clear by philosophy's very existence; indeed Hegel himself remarks that division is the source of the need for philosophy" (138). A concise survey of the debate about Hegel's positions on the concept of contradiction in his dialectal method may be found in M.J. Inwood's Introduction to Hegel Selections.

22. Or, as Walter Benjamin once said, "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Illuminations 256).

23. Harold Bloom describes what I see here as the absence of a third term in Pater as another dialectic of his reading of modern thought, on the one hand, and his reading of ancient Greek, on the other:

> From reading both Hegel and Darwin, Pater had evolved a curious dialectic of history, expounded more thoroughly in Greek Studies, using the terms 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' as the thesis and antithesis of a process always stopping short of synthesis. (20)

24. Carolyn Williams makes a strong argument for the fact that the fifteenth-century "allegorical method does not remain distinct from the historical method in Pater's critical practice . . . " (107). I argue, on the other hand, that Pater's "reconciliation" of the allegorical and "modern" here differs from both of these approaches. I simply do not see the same "overarching desire for 'reconciliation' rather difference" (106-7) in Pater that Williams does, perhaps because I do not think that standard definitions reconciliation, by themselves, are satisfactorily applicable to Pater.

25. Pater's emphasis on, and fascination with, the "individual" recalls Renan more than it does Hegel. To a certain extent, also, the "individual" that Pater marks off here is his own extension of what he sees as the modern scholar's position.

26. Pico Della Mirandola is read quite variously. For a good survey of his writings, see Schmitt' study. See also Sir Thomas More's translation of a life of Mirandola in "The Life of John Picus, Earl of Mirandula." See also my discussion of Burckhardt's reading of him in Chapter Two.

27. See Chapter Five.

28. The idea that peeling things back to their origins is not, of course, an unproblematic one, as Pater himself clearly suggests in Plato and Platonism. For a rigorous discussion of "origins," see Derrida's critique of Lévi-Strauss in Of Grammatology. See also Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," where genealogy "opposes itself to the search for 'origins'" (77). For discussions of Pater and the illusory notion of "origin" or "original" in the wake of this contemporary theory, see Monsman, Pater's Art of Autobiography 20-7; Carolyn Williams, Transfigured World 100; J. Hillis Miller, "Walter Pater: A Partial Portrait"; as well as Loesberg, Aestheticism and Deconstruction, whose entire study is germane to this discussion.

29. Pater often uses the term "human spirit," and this seems to be his attempt to play on the ambiguity of the German "Geist" and the French "l'esprit" both of which have the dual meaning of "mind" and "spirit." Hegel's Phanomenologie des Geistes, for example, is translated as both Phenomenology of Mind and Phenomenology of Spirit.

30. Pater's separation of the transcendent mind is commonly identified as a major departure from Hegel (Hill's Renaissance 440; Dale 243-4). While Hegel's transcendent mind eventually reaches the ideal, Dale is correct in saying that no such end is in Pater's sights (244), which is what I

mean when I say that Pater does not produce for us a clear third term in his use of the Hegelian dialectic.

31. One of Pater's chief historical concerns is this notion of chronological progression versus historical progression, which is to say the difference between passing time and cultural progress. Not surprising from one who so often looked to the Greek ideal, Pater says in "Diaphaneitè," that "progress is a kind of violence" (MS 252).

32. For recent treatments on what we refer to as the "aesthetic," see Terry Eagleton's Ideology of the Aesthetic (1990) and David Carroll's Paraesthetics (1987), as well as Loesberg's recent Aestheticism and Deconstruction (1991).

33. Peter Allan Dale allows that the aesthetic in Pater may problematize his calling Pater the "complete historicist," but he concludes that "the historicist ideal" for Pater provides "the essential spiritual basis for determining aesthetic value" (238). Carolyn Williams, whose rigorous study is crucial on this point, says that the aesthetic and the historic are, in Pater, "two sides of the same epistemological and representational coin" (4). For Jonathan Loesberg, "aestheticism has always operated as a central mode both of engaging in and interpreting of philosophy, history, and politics" (4). In a 1949 essay, "Vico and Aesthetic Historicism," Erich Auerbach traces the concept of an "aesthetic historicism" to "the second half of the eighteenth century, as a reaction against the European predominance of French classicism" (185).

34. Perhaps the best account of the controversy may be found in the editorial notes of Donald L. Hill's edition of Pater's The Renaissance. For a convenient collection of the contemporary reviews, see Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage. See also Tillotson's "Pater, Mr. Rose, and the 'Conclusion' of The Renaissance."

35. No doubt inspired by Pater's infamous reading of *La Gioconda*, there appears, on the cover of the Harold Bloom-edited collection of essays on Pater, Mona Lisa as a vampire. Bloom affixes the following explanation:

> The cover depicts Pater Aesthetic vision of the Mona Lisa as the ageless, vampiric consciousness of Western imagination, the Muse of belatedness, possessing more knowledge than is good for her, or for us.

Even Freud has reacted to Pater's reading. He says in "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" that

> Pater's confident assertion that we can see, from childhood, a face like Mona Lisa's defining itself on the fabric of [da Vinci's] dreams, seems

> convincing and deserves to be taken literally. (quoted in Gay, The Freud Reader 468)

36. Perhaps the most significant revision is from this sentence in the 1873 edition: "High passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy, and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the 'enthusiasm of humanity' (212), to how it appeared in later editions: "Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us (190).

37. I critique this assumption in Chapter Six.

38. J. Hillis Miller sees Pater predilection for violent death as indicative of the kind desire for closure, reconciliation, or completeness that we discussed in the last section:

> Did Pater remain fascinated with longing for a lost completeness which can only be obtained metaleptically, replacing early with late, the lost bliss that never was with the death that he imagines over and over for his various *personae*? (78)

CHAPTER TWO

JACOB BURCKHARDT AND THE HISTORICISM OF ISOLATION

Isolation, Autonomy and Historicism

When Pater's contemporary, Jacob Burckhardt, completed his studies in Bonn in 1843, he turned his attention to a branch of knowledge called *Kulturgeschichte*, or "cultural history." While the term may seem fairly broad to us, according to Karl Dietrich Hüllmann, one of the professors at Bonn during Burckhardt's years there, it represented a significantly different approach to the study of history:

> So far, history has always been treated in a very one-sided way; it has been exclusively concerned with those who have been influential and have written about their experiences. Scant attention has been paid to the lower class [Niedere Volk] or to the age in general. This is the aim of cultural history, which, without regard to social status or to language, encompasses the whole of humanity.[1] (quoted in Gilbert 46)

Although Burckhardt would retain his fascination with those who had been "influential," his work addresses the concerns in this description of cultural history, insofar as he claims to reject historical judgments informed by cultural bias. Burckhardt's vision as to the "aim" of cultural history is admittedly less utopian than Hüllman's and, since

Burckhardt implicitly and explicitly dismisses the the idea of a comprehensive system, this desire to include becomes for Burckhardt a kind of historical relativism.

In this way, Burckhardt recalls Arnoldian disinterest when he explains that reading history requires us not only to purge these biases, but the threat of intervening emotions: "Our task, in lieu of all wishing, is to free ourselves as much as possible from foolish joys and fears and to apply ourselves above all to the understanding of historical development" (Judgments on History and Historians 231). Unlike Arnold, though, Burckhardt concedes that establishing such "objectivity" is, to say the least, problematic--especially when discussing historical phenomena in such close proximity to one's own:

> To be sure, as stated above, the age of revolution makes this objective understanding the most difficult for us. As soon as we become aware of our position, we find ourselves on a more or less defective ship which is drifting along on one wave among millions. But one could also say that we ourselves are, in part, this wave. (231-2)

Such an illustration would seem to indicate that this objectivity is impossible, the cultural conditions for such a stance overwhelming. However, Burckhardt goes on to say that this flux or this wave is the very thing that defines this age of revolution. Adopting a kind of "non-position," therefore, is the appropriate strategy for examining an age in which even the more "steadfast" positions were constantly being undermined.

But this historical relativism extends its compass much further than as a method for examining a single "age." History, he says, "should rejoice at all forces of the past, not merely those that happen to be congenial to a contemporary decade, and regard them as riches" (159). Again, the need for this "non-position" is the result of the historically documented untenability of all other positions. Much as Pater describes the problems with Coleridge's absolutism, Burckhardt says that, unless we adopt this relativized position, history will certainly judge our absurdity:

> Considering the great violence of the struggles at that time and the desire for the destruction of the adversaries, we humane latecomers could not keep absolute sympathy with any side, not even the one we consider ours. (159)

As indicated by my phrase "relativized position," even this non-position is, despite its protests to the contrary, a position, and as such, subverts its own best intentions. In this statement from The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, for example, this relativism, though stated as such, is not absolute. Although the "conjectures" of any historian are relative, Burckhardt says, "Time will judge which impression is the most faithful" (158). Thus, relativism relinquishes historical judgment to later ages whose chronological distance and separateness from past conditions, one might suppose, allows them to be radically

disinterested from those historians who must "live in the midst."

While this method might seem to grant the future historians authority that present thinkers do not have, Burckhardt's historical paradigm is nonetheless skeptical of the notion of historical progress. For Burckhardt, the "story" of history reveals itself to be arbitrary and accidental, and his "non-systematic" historicism attempts to act out this indeterminacy. Above all, history does not--as it does in Hegel, Michelet and, to an extent, in Ranke--advance "civilization" or "mankind" or anything. At bottom, as Hayden White suggests, Burckhardt's version of history inspires nothing so much a kind of Schopenhauerian nihilism:

> . . . there was no *progressive* evolution in artistic sensibility, and in the end nothing but oppression stemmed from political and religious impulses. The truths taught by history were melancholy ones. They led neither to hope nor action. They would not even suggest that humanity itself would *endure*. (Metahistory 230)

Certainly, if anything "progresses" in Burckhardt's thought it is his pessimism, finally achieving a point, one might imagine, where he could no longer write at all.[2]

If nothing progresses in history, that did not mean that a single civilization could not reach a state of "perfection." When, for example, he sets up the Renaissance in Italy as the apex of cultural and artistic freedom and perfection, he realizes that he must account both for the fact that the Italians of the Renaissance produced no plays

"above the second rank in tragedy," and for dramatic and poetic "geniuses" in other countries. His answer implies a historical model of sorts, despite his claims that such things are completely accidental: "The stage, which in its perfection is a late product of every civilization, must wait for its own time and fortune" (Renaissance 163). The Renaissance, Burckhardt maintains, is the happy coincidence of all these developments, producing in this advanced civilization the capacity for the natural sciences, music, biography, and landscape gardening, to name but a few.

While this notion of "development" might seem to contradict Burckhardt's anti-progressivist view of history, we must remember that in Burckhardt any civilization that has reached "perfection" is closer to its own decay than it was in its nascency. That "decay," or what the Renaissance gave way to, and what Burckhardt himself felt condemned to live in, was the Modern Age. Before the Renaissance was the oppression of the Middle Ages. Burckhardt conceived the Renaissance to be a brief hiatus, the "'free play' of the cultural moment," between these "two tyrannies" (White 247).

Not only did the Renaissance uniquely occupy this hiatus, but it did so with radical autonomy, and Burckhardt rejected the idea that outside influence undermined this autonomy. Indeed, in the case of the Renaissance, autonomy subsumes the traditional notion of influence: "What looks like influence is generally no more than a consequence of

the new culture in general, and of the special growth and development of the Italian mind" (Renaissance 127).[3] By thus rewriting the standard defintions of historical influence, Burckhardt also changes the notion of historical autonomy or what he calls "freedom," the result of which was a highly provisional kind of system:

> Since it was free play, it could not be submitted to the same kind of analysis as either the Middle Ages or the Modern Age. Its products could only be caught on the wing, as it were, contemplated in their individuality and gathered under certain very broad and general categories, solely for representational--thought not narrative--purposes. (White 247)

Burckhardt, in other words, has no desire to impose a rigid system on an era that he defined as the absence of such constraints, and if this "system-less" approach coincided with his relativistic view of historicism, so much the better. Such "coincidences," however, do not mean that we can conflate Burckhardtian "freedom" and "relativism." While at first glance they may seem to bear a close structural resemblance, the importance of this "freedom" in Burckhardt demands that we examine it further.

As a point of departure, we might say that freedom in Burckhardt is simply the absence of bondage. Release from these bonds requires that we achieve a certain distance from the "historical forces" that weigh us down and in turn allows us to transcend the chains that both the "aggressor" and the "defender" place on us (Force and Freedom 84). The Renaissance Man--*l'omo universale*--achieved this freedom

when he found himself suddenly "[f]reed from the countless bonds which elsewhere in Europe checked progress" (Renaissance 146). Such freedom meant that the mind that had once been laden with material and political concerns could now turn from its own corporeality to "the discovery of the outward universe, and to the representation of it in speech and in form" (146).

This is, however, historically specific freedom, localized not only in a single epoch and country but in a single kind of person. Freedom as regards historical inquiry plays a more complicated role in Burckhardt. Taking the wave metaphor that Burckhardt uses to describe historicism in the age of revolution, White describes Burckhardt's conception of the historical process as both "wave and metastasis . . . the former image suggests the notion of constant change, the latter the lack of continuity between impulses" (249). In this Foucaultian image of history we might assume that freedom would be this "free" play of elements, the spaces between which prevent their constraint by any identifiable system. Paradoxically, Burckhardt seems to imply the contrary. As he suggests in his Renaissance, the passing of "time" is what enables this freedom. Rejecting the "Archimedean point outside [the same] events" in which they take part, Burckhardt claims that "not until much later can the mind soar in perfect freedom over such a past." We must remember, he continues,

that historical flux is inevitably confusing and that we must resist judgment, situated as we are as "men of a definite epoch." Thus, freedom in historicism is, after all, this "point outside," this coalescing of contradictory impulses, the "soar" of the mind in "perfect freedom." At the same time that this role implies a sense of power, the historian is nonetheless forbidden to exercise this power through judgment; he must always regard history with "passive tribute" in a "*spirit of contemplation*" (Force 84-5).

If rendering all considerations relative tends to check the Burckhardt's authority as historian, then he found in the "free play" of the Renaissance ample justification for shifting that authority to the individual actor within history. Perhaps Burckhardt's most tenacious legacy--the catalyst, many agree, for Greenblatt's celebrated Renaissance Self-fashioning--is the rise of the individual as a cultural development, giving birth to the infamous Renaissance Man:

> When this impulse to the highest individual development was combined with a powerful and varied nature, which had mastered all the elements of the culture of the age, then arose the 'all-sided man'--'l'omo universale--who belonged to Italy alone . . . But in Italy at the time of the Renaissance, we find artists who in every branch created new and perfect works, and who also made the greatest impression as men. Others, outside the arts they practiced, were masters of a vast circle of spiritual interests. (Renaissance 73).

Fully autonomous both in his individual, spiritual, and national power ("Italy alone"), Renaissance Man found himself standing free from "the fetters of a thousand years, [where] self-realization became the goal, and new valuations of the world and of man became current" (Gooch 531). But the fallout from such explosive and unrestrained freedom must leave in its wake some political baggage. Absolutely, replies Burckhardt, but the elimination of these political considerations is what defines this new individual: "[Before the Renaissance] Man was conscious of himself only a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation--only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air" (70). While such statements may sound strange coming from the writer of "The State as a Work of Art," politics do not disappear *per se*; they have merely become reformulated:

> an *objective* treatment and consideration of the state and of all things of this world became possible. The *subjective* side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a *spiritual* individual, and recognized himself as such. (70)

Thus, as that title of the first chapter of Burckhardt's Renaissance suggests, the political is converted, or collapses, into the aesthetic. Politics has moved from defining and confining the subject into an object outside of, and fully directed by, the subject. While for Burckhardt Renaissance Italy is a political culture,

politics has no real claim on the individual, and can be dispensed with at any time.

Anyone familiar with the biographies of any of the great Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo or Raphael, or even with Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" realizes that this "autonomy" is fairly localized in the social structure. Hobbled with enough "commissioned" work for three lifetimes, Michelangelo, for example, had little time indeed to reflect on this new-found freedom.[4] Even the deified Lorenzo "Il Magnifico" de Medici--Renaissance Man personified--constantly had his "autonomy" checked by political maneuverings between Florentine families, by constant power struggles with Pope Julius II, and by the increasing threat of Savonarola and his followers to this artistic freedom. Although Burckhardt mentions that "educated women" participated in the same individuality, this autonomy, as David Norbrook points out, was "restricted to the male members of a ruling elite, on the condition that they abstain from any independent political activity or critical reflection" (96).[5] If the State did indeed become a "work of art" in the Renaissance, then its politics became a medium that dominated and orchestrated as no other, infiltrating every facet of Renaissance Italy, especially the "fine arts," in which no one could even attempt a work of art without some kind of sponsorship.

Stephen Greenblatt's critique of the Burckhardtian individual more or less follows the lines of the critique initiated by Henri Thode in 1885: that this autonomy of both individual and nation is not, after all, as unqualified and exclusive as Burckhardt would have us believe.[6] While Burckhardt takes pains to show how this individuality develops independent of the Church along secular lines, Greenblatt contends that "both secular and religious impulses contributed to the same psychic structure" (46).[7] Although Burckhardt isolates this "psychic structure" in Italy, Greenblatt instances both More and Montaigne for his support of a more extensive Renaissance which, later in the book, he justifies:

> While not only in Italy, but in France and England as well, the old feudal models gradually crumbled and fell into ruins, men created new models, precisely as a way of containing and channeling the energies which had been released. (162)[8]

As Greenblatt describes it, this new "freedom" is as overwhelming and ultimately threatening as the metaphorical "wave of history" that Burckhardt employs elsewhere. The impulse then is not to revel in the freedom that is defined by the destruction of familiar structures, but to confine or enclose it somehow. Burckhardt, on the other hand, might argue that these models are constructed as a response to this freedom for objective or aesthetic reasons--as art and not as the "psychic" or subjective response that Greenblatt

implies. These structures are erected out of will rather than need.

Both models, however, suggest the desire to control which Burckhardt, in a crucial development of the individual, says is the province of the "great man."[9] As he constructs the autonomous individual and emphasizes his freedom from political bonds, it would seem that the next logical step for Burckhardt would be a concentration on the man who converts this autonomy to control and the exercise of power. Indeed, the Great Man has the power to consolidate history, something that Burckhardt does not even grant the historian the ability to do:

> History tends at times to become suddenly concentrated in one man, who is then obeyed by the world.
>
> These great individuals represent the coincidence of the general and the particular, of the static and the dynamic, in *one* personality. They subsume States, religions, cultures and crises. (Force 325)

More frightening perhaps than this conception of history is that the Burckhardtian Great Man is born and not made. The men who deliberately "initiate" the great movements of history are always "devoured," says Burckhardt; the desire to move history is not, after all, a conscious one. The obvious pretenders burn away, and the Great Man apocalyptically awaits: "the man born to bring the culminating movement to its close, to calm its separate waves and stand astride the abyss, is slowly growing to maturity, menaced by huge dangers and recognized by few"

(326). Once poised to act, the Great Man, unlike the historian it should be noted, becomes one with whom "mere contemplation is incompatible." He is

> moved primarily by a genuine will to master the situation and at the same time by an exceptional <u>strength</u> of will, which creates an atmosphere of fascination, attracts itself to every element of power and rule, and subjects them to its own ends. (329)

Such conceptions of history should be familiar to those who see this and other Great Man theories as inevitable developments of both English and Germanic Romanticism, epochs during which the rise of the individual may well have provided the impetus for Burckhardt's locating its beginning in the Renaissance. Indeed, two names that may come to mind at this point would be Carlyle and Nietzsche. While in future sections of this study we will examine the consequences of Carlyle's Great Man Theory, it would be unwise to conflate the three. Although we may dispense with James Nichols's claim that Burckhardt may be distinguished from Carlyle and Nietzsche because he alone "maintained enough intellectual and ethical independence," Burckhardt's theory operates on a relative notion of greatness (<u>Force</u>, Introduction 69). In his characteristic retreat from grand systems and determinism, he both embraces and qualifies his own definition of greatness:

> . . . we are fully aware of the ambiguity in the idea of greatness, and must, as a matter of course, abandon any attempt at scientific system. . . . Nevertheless we feel that we cannot do without the idea of greatness and that we must not

> abandon it. It will, however, remain relative. We cannot hope to arrive at an absolute definition. (Force 303)

If this abstracted greatness resists "absolute definition," however, the consequences of its exercise do not. Indeed, the consolidation of history of which Burckhardt speaks is the result of the union between the autonomy of the individual and political power. Paradoxically, then, what began as the desire to be separated from politics, to relegate politics to an object outside the subject, turns into a manifestly political act--one in which power has been substantially magnified. Attempts to locate this will to power in an individual who is born or destined to wield it, who cannot resist its pull, all seem to undermine Burckhardt's original conception of the individual who moves in perfect autonomy.

This autonomy, in its various forms, functions as a model for Burckhardtian historicism. Repeatedly, Burckhardt moves to isolate, to separate element from structure, to create insurmountable spaces between discourses. The result is an almost Foucaultian anti-conception of history: a vast web of discourse, "defined" only by the ruptures that move within, a space so formless and immense that it resists all efforts either to explain it or to make global statements on the structures that construct it. For Pater, this phenomenology of history not only provides a grounding for his aestheticism, but ultimately becomes preferable to the

grand teleological systems of Hegel, wherein the historical object becomes subsumed by the historical structure.

The Essay and Its Subjects

This resistance-to-systems approach to history has made it possible for readers of Burckhardt to attach the words "arbitrary" and even "scattershot" to his scholarship. Whatever structure there actually is in Burckhardt, evidenced by his concentration on "State, religion, and culture," is not so much a framework, says Benedetto Croce, as "a scheme in which to frame [Burckhardt's] scattered observations" (104). While we might detect a tone of dismissal in this and other of Croce's criticisms of Burckhardt, Hayden White contends that this "scattered" appearance is homologous to Burckhardt's approach to history, which attempts to separate itself from narrative historical methods:

> . . . Burckhardt called his "philosophy of history" a "theory" of history, and presented it as nothing more than an "arbitrary" arrangement of the materials for purposes of presentation and analysis. (237)

Indeed, Burckhardt resists the concept of "philosophy" as a method of organizing history. Again, he does so in an attempt to keep the discourses separate: "The philosophy of history is a centaur, a contradiction in terms, for history co-ordinates, and hence is unphilosophical, while philosophy subordinates, and hence is unhistorical" (Force 80). Once we have rejected any claim to "historical principles," then,

what are we left with? As Croce hinted before, we can only turn to "observation, taking traverse sections of history in as many directions as possible" (80).

Although it is not known whether Pater ever read Burckhardt, Pater scholars may recognize both the accusations of a "scattershot" scholarship and this allegiance to "observation" in the investigation of history.[10] Too often, readers of Pater mistake this skepticism towards universal explanations, towards historical inquiry as the discovery and reification of immutable truths, as laziness, or worse, rank solipsism. What may be, perhaps, a more accurate estimation is suggested by Burckhardt's claim that the "outlines" of any civilization, of any artifact, will appear differently "to each eye," that "it is unavoidable that individual judgement and feeling should tell every moment both on the writer and the reader" (Renaissance 2).

Indeed, enlisting such "authority" from the subjective would seem to make things arbitrary, if not in their perception, then in their representation. To the extent that "arbitrariness" is a criticism, however, such charges are addressed under the auspices of some system other this "anti-system." Nor does this reliance on subjective analysis grant the historian, either in Burckhardt or Pater, *carte blanche*. Pater, an ardent reader of Fichte--some of whose notions of the subjective Pater no doubt borrowed--

aligned himself with Fichte's concept of the Ideal Student,[11] whose reliance on the self as the sole critical apparatus is countered by a responsibility to hone that apparatus. Such "responsibility" is analogous both to Arnold's "disinterested critic" and to Burckhardt's historian, disabused of all "foolish joys and fears" that might accompany a subjective approach. Somewhere between these two "counters," perhaps, is Pater's belief that the mind could function as a kind of scientific instrument, one whose "end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element" (R xxi). Far from leading the critic to partiality, this mind, as in Burckhardt, has the Rankean ability to see that "all periods, types, schools of taste are in themselves equal" (xxi).[12]

If this "subjective historicism" threatens to make the scholar both judge and jury, then it finds, again, its counter in Burckhardt's--and, as we will see, in Pater's--conception of the personality as constructed historically:

> Indeed, the development of the personality is essentially involved in the recognition of it in oneself and in others. Between these two great processes our narrative has placed the influence of ancient literature, because the mode of conceiving and representing both the individual and human nature in general was defined and coloured by that influence. But the power of conception and representation lay in the age and in the people.
> (Renaissance 158).

This "personality" is an artifact that must be read historically. Similarly, the reader's personality too is an artifact that must be read, since it influences as much as it is influenced. In Renaissance scholarship, Burckhardt equates the influence of "ancient literature" with the influence of personality, not merely of the individual but of the age constructed by those personalities.

The personality, for both Burckhardt and Pater, thus becomes a text and, as such, is susceptible to the same maneuvers that accompany any other text or even the readings of that text. Pater takes this conception of the personality as textual influence a bit further as these "influences" are nearly always "personified." He reads, for example, this "influence of ancient literature" by investing, say, Denys l'Auxerrois or Duke Carl of Rosenmold with both the text and the reading: Duke Carl represents not only the anachronistic influence of Apollo, but also the reader who encounters this text, and who must pay the consequences for his reading. This reliance on the personality in Pater is thus an attempt not only to "personify" history, but to read both the subject and the individual as artifacts that he, like Burckhardt, find worthy of historical study. If such an approach tends to make the scholarship produced from it seem piecemeal and "impressionistic," then such criticisms say more about the reader's need for comprehensive systems than they do about

the manner and vehicle through which both Burckhardt and Pater choose to conduct their conceptions of history.

Burckhardt addresses the criticism that the absence of a comprehensive system atomizes historical scholarship by calling his hefty Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy an "essay." In the first section of the book, he justifies calling it so with a curious mixture of apology and irony. It is also an explanation that addresses these similar criticisms of both him and Pater:

> No one is more conscious than the writer with what limited means and strength he has addressed himself to a task so arduous. And even if he could look with greater confidence upon his own researches, he would hardly feel more assured of the approval of competent judges. (1)

He goes on to qualify this seemingly unqualified *mea culpa* by attributing whatever shortcomings he foresees not to his own methods, but to the relativity and indeterminacy of taste and reading. Indeed, he continues, such "problems" in reading, especially historical reading, require a less monolithic forum for their exercise. Much of this uncertainty, Burckhardt grants, comes from the subject matter, which "calls for fresh investigation, and may be studied with advantage from the most varied points of view." What follows this opening of possibilities, however, is a regret for the very process that he is about to undertake. The assumption that history is whole and complete is undermined by the fact that the only way it can be rendered "intelligible" is to break this "great intellectual process"

up into "single, and . . . arbitrary categories." Such a necessity necessitates "gaps" in the "narrative," which, Burckhardt claims, he tried to "fill" with a discussion on the "Art of the Renaissance"--but with only partial success (1).

Surely this is Burckhardt at play: raising issues of "intelligibility" and "arbitrariness" at the same time that he attempts to undercut them not once (by attempting to "fill" these "gaps"), but again by declaring that not only was he unsuccessful here, but he doubts that filling such gaps is ever possible. What we are left with is an "essay" with humbler and more practical claims on narrative completeness, a medium in which the kind of play exhibited in this justification finds its place.

There are, of course, differing speculations on the import of Burckhardt's choice of the "essay." For Peter Gay, the essay, by virtue of its status as a "tentative statement" gives Burckhardt more "room for maneuver" and is perhaps accurate in detecting in Burckhardt a desire to "suspend" the received rules of historical narrative (150). Along these lines, but with important distinctions, Benedetto Croce sees in Burckhardt an almost "anti-narrative" approach to history: "Thus his historical works tend not to give the "story" of the drama and dialectic of action, but to give the "picture," the description of a fixed and immobilized reality" (104). While it is

problematic to align Burckhardt with a "fixed and immobilized reality," Burckhardt does resist a fluid narrative, inasmuch as his Renaissance is a series of nearly unconnected "portraits" that tend to isolate their subject both contextually and stylistically. Perhaps it is this "separateness" that Hayden White reacts to when he calls Burckhardt's essay "all *transition*" and says that the Renaissance essay "had no proper beginning and no end, at least no end that was a consummation or resolution of a drama" (246). David Norbrook, perhaps recalling Croce, sees this rejection of narrative as evidence of Burckhardt's skepticism and of his "rigorously synchronic" method (95).

While Pater's intermittent Hegelianism would make it difficult to see his method as completely "synchronic," like the Burckhardt of Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, he chooses the essay as his vehicle and art form-- precisely because it calls into question received assumptions about historical narrative. Some may argue that Pater's unorthodox approach to narration is the result of neglect rather than critique; that plot is non-existent for him, for example, is a charge that has often been levied against Pater's forays into fiction. Such judgments, however, presented as if narrative convention were something that Pater merely forgot to do, ignore the complexities of Pater's long experiment with the fictional and non-fictional essay.

Pater's famous essay on "Style" (1888) has a tripartite agenda: to celebrate the scholar; to question the validity of how we formulate rigid oppositions; and to elevate the estimation of prose to an art form. It is these last two items that I would like to discuss here. Unlike Burckhardt's briefer "apology" for the essay, there are no cleverly rhetorical retreats and advances in Pater's extended defense; his argument is sure-footed and direct where Burckhardt's is playful and covert. To the accusation that prose has no claim on the world of art, for instance, Pater replies

> it will be useless to protest that [prose] can be nothing at all, except something very tamely and narrowly confined to mainly practical ends--a kind of 'good roundhand;' as useless as the protest that poetry may not touch prosaic subjects. . . . (A 6)

Refiguring the statements of such figures as Dryden, who proposed a more rigid division between poetry and prose, and Wordsworth, whose line between the two was "technical or accidental," Pater demonstrates not only how this line is blurred in their work and elsewhere, but how such oppositions cannot even be made by depending on the assuredness of "facts"; such lines are, at the very least, "hard to draw" (8).

Indeed, it is into this world of "facts" that Pater extends the province of the prose writer. There are no unmediated facts for Pater, not even scientific ones, for any "fact" not only must be always represented by language

but, more crucially, by a "writer," an interpretation. It is here that the fact "as in itself it really is" begins to fade into the consciousness of the writer, and where it becomes

> an expression no longer of fact but of [the writer's] sense of it, his peculiar intuition of a world, prospective, or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present, in either case changed somewhat from the actual world. (8-9)

In historical writing especially the "writer's sense of fact" will always "take the place of fact." As if recalling Burckhardt's qualification of the historian's "objectivity," Pater argues that even the most "objective" of historians is forced to "select" from the available data, the result of which is a selection that inevitably "assert[s] something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within" (9). Once what Pater sees as this false separation between prose as the vehicle of fact and poetry as the vehicle of imagination has been perforated, prose must by default be extended into the world not only of fine art, but of "good art" (10).

As with Burckhardt, for whom the Renaissance is significant because it signaled the rise of the individual, "Good art," for Pater, is nearly always subservient to the artist. Indeed, as he says towards the end of his essay on "Style," appreciation of the *objet d'art* is radically dependent on the subject behind its "creation":

> There are some to whom nothing has any real interest, or real meaning, except as operative in

> a given person; and it is they who best appreciate the quality of soul in literary art. They seem to know a *person*, in a book, and make way by intuition. (27)

This "soul," he continues, is the bearer of extra-textual information, and this reading of the person behind the text is what reveals this "soul" in art:

> . . . it is the characteristic of soul, in this sense of the word, that it does but suggest what can never be uttered, not as being different from, or more obscure than, what actually gets said, but as containing that plenary substance of which there is only one phase or facet in what is there expressed. (27)

Prose, then, also bears the subtleties that conventional wisdom in Pater's time thought could be rendered only in poetry.

More crucial, though, is Pater's contention that, for the intuitive reader, prose hints at "suggestions" that cannot be present on the linguistic surface, suggestions that in fact "can never be uttered." Despite its so-called vulgarity, in other words, prose writing positions itself as an exclusive medium wherein the text is constantly in "play." "Intuition" becomes the catalyst for this suggestive writing, and comes from those who have rejected the concepts of "real meaning" and "real interest." The play of language thus expands beyond the writer's, or stylist's, ability to control it.

Realizing that language thus expands and creates meaning has profound implications for historical writing. Pater, for instance, was never comfortable with writing

"straight" history, and his imaginary portraits can be seen as attempts to manipulate the effect of this intuitive meaning. For Burckhardt, the fact that history is always rendered in language means that any history is already a failed enterprise, and we can see his response in his playful "justification" for calling his tome on the Renaissance an "essay." Both justifications also clear the way for a structure of historical inquiry wherein this play will generously allow for "personal preference" in its choice of subject matter and emphasis, such preferences being the only response to those for whom "nothing has any real interest, or real meaning."

Investing historical authority solely in the writing subject is always a suspect maneuver. Croce's Burckhardt, for instance, is someone who "[l]ike all pessimists . . . had in him a streak of unsatisfiable hedonism" (103). It might be said that Benedetto Croce's critique of Pater would follow much the same lines. Croce does not explain his pronouncement, but we may find its antecedents in this description of Burckhardt as a curiously Paterian art critic:

> His judgements may be contradicted here and there, and there is room for much amplification and inquiry into his concept of art, but he took the royal road of the history of art, which is the history of single works of genius and not of anything else. (109)

Subjective choice of subject is the tacit target here, and thus would include Pater the essayist. For both Pater and

Burckhardt this selectiveness is both a calculated, and inevitable, response to the realization that all historical representation is the product of selective and subjective choice.

Hayden White's reading of Burckhardt may be more helpful than even Croce's own in identifying what Croce is reacting to, as well as, and more importantly, in helping us come to terms with the juxtaposition of history and aesthetics in both Burckhardt and Pater. For Burckhardt, as we have seen, the Renaissance was defined by its autonomy, by its unique construction of collective but "separate spheres." The aesthetic enjoys a paradoxical position in Burckhardt: aesthetics is itself a separate sphere at the same time that, it may be said, aesthetic or "formal" considerations are what define Burckhardt's global conception of the period. White's reading of the structure of Burckhardt's history resonates with overtones of Renaissance-era Pater:

> Everything sought to be what it was "in itself," not to be perverted by any other considerations that would destroy the perfection of its own essential outline. Things came to be seen *clearly*, and life was lived for the achievement of formal consistency alone. (245)

Everything in Burckhardt's Renaissance is converted so that it can be read aesthetically; even that which resides in the "more mundane sphere of human existence was transformed into an art" and "was indentured to strive for its own intrinsic sublime form" (245). Within such a conversion, politics

become aestheticized, converted to an autonomous sphere that can be excluded when necessary, like a stray brushstroke in an otherwise flawless painting.

If Burckhardt is willing to convert political structures into aesthetic objects, as the title of Burckhardt's famous chapter--"The State as a Work of Art"--suggests, then Pater is not so eager to extend his chiefly aesthetic focus into the Machiavellian realm of political machination. This studied reluctance to blur the focus of his study, to resist specificity at the same time that his essays are specific studies, has brought Pater his share of criticism. The closest perhaps that Pater comes to "defining" his Renaissance is in this listing of what the age produced, such as

> . . . its positive results in the things of the intellect and imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, and their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type. (R xxiii)

So vague is this list that it could be said of virtually any age--and that is perhaps Pater's point. Attempts to define any "age," he goes on to say, is troublesome at best, proceeding as such attempts do "from different starting-points, and by unconnected roads" (xxiii). Like Burckhardt, he is skeptical of any attempt to systematize, to bring the arbitrariness and surprise of history under any framework that seeks to limit it. What we are left with in Pater's

Renaissance, then, is not a complete map but rather assorted relics from that "age," which may or may not be "perfect" examples of the period; these relics may in fact extend into other eras. The Renaissance *Zeitgeist*, for example, that Burckhardt painstakingly attempts to isolate, Pater declares "may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its motives already clearly pronounced," and extends, after the Italian Renaissance, into France (xxii-iii).

It is difficult not to think of Burckhardt (and perhaps Michelet) as, at least, one of the targets of Pater's critique of previous conceptions of the Renaissance. He proposes giving the Renaissance "a much wider scope that was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century . . . ." And it could well be Pater that Greenblatt recalls when he critiques Burckhardt's claim that Renaissance art was purely secular; for Pater, Renaissance art has been "falsely opposed" to "Christian art" (xxii).[13]

Whether or not Burckhardt is the target of Pater's correction, though, is finally not the point. When we juxtapose both Pater's and Burckhardt's notions of the role of the aesthetic in history, we find that while both may rely on formal readings of historical phenomena, the aesthetic in Burckhardt confines and brackets, where Pater's aesthetic seeks to extend if not erase the boundaries between historical definitions. In this way, perhaps

Pater's method is the more radically aesthetic of the two: while Burckhardt thinks in terms of institutions and of individuals who are themselves institutions, Pater is more skeptical of such groupings and prefers to keep his focus on the "single" figure, and even within this tight compass, we find that he resists unequivocal definition.

Exhumation, Anachronism, and Reconciliation

Defining the Renaissance in terms of its "revival of antiquity," as Burckhardt does and Pater resists doing, troubles what Burckhardt sees as the age's "autonomy." Burckhardt responds to this autonomy question by proposing that this "revival" would not have been possible if not for the distinctly Italian character: the Italian language's easy proximity to Latin, not to mention "the genius of the Italian people" (Renaissance 89-90). Thus, the autonomy of "genius" subsumes this antiquity or "influence" and renders it effectively impotent.

This antiquity raises questions of anachronism, however, that may not be so easily referred to this unassailable autonomy. What these questions are and how they relate to Pater's notions of anachronism, in turn, demands closer scrutiny. To that end, let us look at what should be a familiar kind of story from Burckhardt's "The Revival of Antiquity" section:

> In this mood of public feeling, a report arose, that on April 18, 1485, the corpse of a young Roman lady of the classical period--wonderfully

> beautiful and in perfect preservation--had been discovered. . . . On this basis the following story was built. The Lombards disappeared with the jewels and treasure which were found with the corpse in the sarcophagus. The body had been coated with an antiseptic essence, and was as fresh and flexible as that of a girl of fifteen the hour after death. It was said that she still kept the colours of life, with eyes and mouth half open. She was taken to the palace of the 'Conservatori' on the Capitol; and then a pilgrimage to see her began. Among the crowd were many who came to paint her; 'for she was more beautiful than can be said or written, and, were it said or written, it would not be believed by those who had not seen her.' By order of Innocent VIII she was secretly buried one night outside the Pincian Gate; the empty sarcophagus remained in the court of the 'Conservatori.' Probably a coloured mask of wax or some other material was modelled in the classical style on the face of the corpse, with which the gilded hair of which we read would harmonize admirably. The touching point in the story is not the fact itself, but the firm belief that an ancient body, *which was now thought to be at last really before men's eyes*, must of necessity be far more beautiful than anything of modern date. (Renaissance 95-6; emphasis added)[14]

The implications of what Burckhardt identifies as the "touching point" of the story of this unearthed body are never addressed by him. Instead, he goes on the tell of the renewed interest in unearthing "old Rome."

For us, however, this story opens up as many implications as there are similarities to Pater's "Duke Carl of Rosenmold." Firmly within the celebrated *Quattrocento* and thus a product of Burckhardt's Italian autonomy, this story and the "point" that Burckhardt makes about it are significantly more than "touching," reaching back as they do to an era that produces what "must of necessity be far more

beautiful than anything of modern date." We may want to remain skeptical about such obvious irony, however. Historical perspective, let us remember, comes for Burckhardt only after the passing of time, and those who glorified these remains could not have known that theirs was, within this paradigm, a time free from influence, that they were actually enacting a non-contingent, aesthetic or formal reaction to an unearthed curiosity. Burckhardt even goes so far as to imagine this reading of theirs: they "probably" made a mask, Burckhardt speculates, that would "harmonize admirably" with the corpse's hair. This speculative reading of Burckhardt's even allows these Italians to engage the ancient idiom--"classical style"--but without engaging the period itself. That is, Ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy merge in what he sees to be a harmless way by producing art that "harmonizes." But this is fascination, not obsession or cultural dialectics, Burckhardt seems to say; nothing is reconciled.

Perhaps the most curious element of Burckhardt's rendition of the story is the clause that interrupts the last sentence: "which was now thought to be at last really before men's eyes." "At last" invests the Burckhardt's Renaissance Italians with the same desire for immediate identification with the past that we see in Pater's pre-*Aufklärung* Germany.

There is more to the consequences of this unearthing than Burckhardt's representation of it indicates. He describes, even emphasizes the crucial "touching point," and then moves on to something else. He implies that those who saw the corpse had a collective feeling of inferiority to this previous golden age. While this feeling tends to conflict with Burckhardt's assumption that the Renaissance was the pinnacle of Western civilization, what is more important are the ways in which Burckhardt's retelling of this anecdote refigures nineteenth-century anxieties about exhumation and history. This is all not to say that Renaissance Italy did not share these concerns, only that the need to see the corpse, study it, situate it, dress it up, and re-bury it betrays a concern not only with the past, but with a need to interrogate the past through the body that is a curiously nineteenth-century phenomenon.

At the same time that these two representations of exhumed bodies reveal similar concerns with historiography, they differ in what the corpses finally signify for those who read them. For Pater, Duke Carl achieves the ironic status of a martyr as his "spirit" is represented in the *Aufklärung*--itself marked by a renewed interest in "antiquity"--a period of "light" and "reason" after long centuries of "darkness" and "superstition." The educated reader of the corpses--Pater for instance--can easily detect the representational significance of the bodies, even as he

leaves the villagers in a state of bewilderment. As a historiographer in the presence of compelling evidence, in other words, he can trace and then attach historical significance to the corpses. He reads and reconstructs them in much the same that the traveler in "Denys l'Auxerrois" reads the stained glass.

The corpses in Burckhardt's narrative, on the other hand, after triggering that initial state of curiosity, represent nothing. Not only can this ancient "influence" not penetrate the autonomous shell of the Renaissance, but having the corpse actually "represent" a "golden age," or worse, prophesy a renewal of light and wisdom after a age of medieval darkness, evidences an idealism of which Burckhardt wants no part. In Judgments on History and Historians, Burckhardt critiques this concept of cultural rejuvenation on the grounds that such a notion is hopelessly based on a system fed by benevolence:

> [we] need not excuse ourselves with the barren argument that what fell did so for good reasons, or that after a fall there comes a resurgence. For by no means every destruction has been followed by a rejuvenation (those involved and their relatives will have none of rejuvenation through decay), and the great destroyers of life remain an enigma to us. (27)

History, having no logic, provides no signposts of promised renewal.

This is not to say that Pater's reading of the exhumed corpses is based on such a system; one would need to do some highly selective reading to make Pater into the practitioner

of an unexamined idealism. Whereas Pater's corpses occupy a complex and ironic space, Burckhardt's exist for evidential reasons alone. He concludes nothing about them, save his description of what may or may not have been the Italian's cultural jealousy. In other words, Duke Carl, despite the ridiculousness of his actions, by his death completes the grand anachronism of "returning" Germany to the Apollonian. For Burckhardt's Renaissance Italy no anachronism is permitted, protected as it is by an unassailable autonomy. Indeed, this fascination with antiquity would not even have existed if not for the "genius of the Italian people."

In both Pater's and Burckhardt's readings of the corpses, however, we find a similar desire to bracket them off, to reduce them phenomenologically, to read them as self-enclosed pieces of evidence with their own logic and structure. Following from this tendency is a corresponding skepticism, for both Pater and Burckhardt, toward historical or textual "origins." For Burckhardt, examining historical evidence is only possible after we have disabused ourselves of the need to find logical connections, to trace lineages back to some original purity. These examinations

> not only may and must leave out of account all hypothetical primitive conditions, all discussions of origins; we must also confine ourselves to the active races, and among these, to the peoples whose history yields us pictures of civilization which are sufficiently and indisputably distinct. (Force 82)

He implies here that this bracketing in some cases may be difficult and impossible. While the Burckhardtian historian cannot read all things with the same exacting clarity, he makes no pretensions to what his good friend Nietzsche called the *überhistorische*.

Pater's critique of origins implies a similar bracketing of phenomena, but approaches it, as we have seen, through the notion of the palimpsest. Even those texts which we deem to be "very original products of human genius" are "old also." What we detect as original or "new" is the "form," the new dressing on an old body: " . . . in the creation of philosophical literature, as in all other products of art, *form*, in the full signification of the word, is everything, and the mere matter is nothing" (PP 8). While the palimpsestic model, like Burckhardt's notion of the historian's choice, resists any attempt to trace these "products of art" to their origins, Pater attempts a more comprehensive phenomenological reduction of discourse into "form" or artistic production, almost as if the vague substance between the bold outlines fades before we can attempt a reading of it.

At the same time that we realize the necessity for this skepticism in historical inquiry, however, we must also take account of what is factored out of both models. Both Pater and Burckhardt propose their own form of bracketing in an attempt to establish a "common" ground on which to read

their subject, an attempt to approach, even as they realize they can never reach, a kind of objectivity. While for Burckhardt this bracketing still does not remove the need to choose carefully one's subject, for Pater all "products of art" can be reduced to pure "form." And while both are aware that a preoccupation with origins and lineages opens the door for a prejudicial reading, they are either unaware of, or unconcerned by, the political consequences of such a bracketing, that to establish boundaries creates two sides, evidenced by the fact that Burckhardt speaks of "active races" at the same time that he denies the necessity of theories of race. It would be too reductive to say that for Pater these two sides are the aesthetic and the political, but this contention that all artistic production can be reduced to "form" is fertile territory for critique, political and otherwise, as his formalist descendants can certainly attest.[15] Burckhardt, on the other hand, states directly what must remain outside the fence of historical examination:

> Questions such as the influence of soil and climate, or of the movement of history from east to west, are introductory questions for the philosophers of history, but not for us, and hence quite outside our scope. The same holds good for all cosmologies, theories of race, the geography of the three ancient continents, and so on. (82-3).

Again, we see the tendency in Burckhardt towards isolation: both of the subject of inquiry and of his own role as historian. The same impulse that leads him to call <u>The</u>

Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy an essay is at work here, rolling back his own influence, confining the scope of his argument before it approaches the dreaded status of "system."

If it is banal to say at this point that even Burckhardt's anti-system is itself a system, it is equally problematic to call either Burckhardt's or Pater's "method" purely formalist. While the movement in Burckhardt's Renaissance is to make everything, including political institutions such as "the state" and "war," into "works of art," he also stresses the significance of the other side of that conceit and emphasizes the "artist" behind such works: i.e Machiavelli, Leo X, Lorenzo "Il Magnifico" de Medici, and so on. In this attention to the figure behind the "form," Pater is similar, despite his protestations of a purely formal reading. And if this bracketing leads both into considering the individual as a "work of art," then this same preoccupation with the individual, along with the unpredictability that attends it, as is often the case in both Burckhardt and Pater, leads them out of this confinement. The individual, in other words, has a dual role in Pater and Burckhardt: at the same time that they attempt to define or bracket the figure, this same figure may serve as a transcendent presence for the writers, such as Pater's Leonardo Da Vinci or Burckhardt's Pico Della Mirandola.

In both cases, this figure is isolated formally by the essay. Many of Pater's essays, for example, are constructed biographically: the subject's life expends its trajectory as the essay concludes. Burckhardt divides his essay into sections--chapters by any other name--and within these sections appear the individuals. Unlike Pater, he does not dispense with them in one smooth biographical gesture, but instead breaks the life into anecdotes that often do not even appear in the same section. These become isolated areas of interest all confined within this amorphous form he calls the "essay." In this way, the Burckhardtian individual is homologous to the form of the Burckhardtian essay: vast, divided, compartmentalized, and incomplete.

The extent to which both Burckhardt's and Pater's readings disagree on the thought and place of Pico Della Mirandola underscores what is at stake in both writers conception of the individual. For Burckhardt, Pico was an individual among individuals, the "only man who loudly and vigourously defended the truth and science of all ages against the one-sided worship of classical antiquity."[16] For Pater, Pico's world is "a limited place, bounded by actual crystal walls, and a material firmament; it is like a painted toy . . . " (R 32). Burckhardt's Pico is a scholar to whom no discourse is excluded from consideration:

> He knew how to value not only Averroës and the Jewish investigators, but also the scholastic writers of the Middle Ages, according to the matter of their writings . . . . he despised the

> purism of pedants and the current over-estimate of borrowed forms, especially when joined, as they often are, with one-sidedness, and involving indifference to wider truth of the things themselves.
> (Renaissance 102)

Pater's Pico is a scholar who, for all his expansive reading, is monomaniacally bent on the reconciliation of all discourses, one whose pride is much larger than his intellectual acumen, who, "like some knight-errant of philosophy . . . [offers] to defend nine hundred bold paradoxes, drawn from the most opposite sources, against all comers" (30).

What Burckhardt sees as the epitome of the Renaissance Man--self-reliant, bold, exquisitely well-read--Pater sees as an admirable curiosity. What is surprising in Burckhardt's version of this figure is his reliance on terms--such as "truth" and "all ages"--that he so often forbids the historian to use. Despite Burckhardt's allegiance to historical relativism, the figure of Pico, for Burckhardt, transcends the same boundaries that Burckhardt himself so carefully erects around that period called the Renaissance. Pater manages to avoid this dilemma by distancing his "modern" methodology from Pico's allegorical one; Pater presents Pico's version of history only after he has assured the reader that he is, indeed, conversant with the tenets of "modern" historicism. Even then, Pico remains the weaver of a "strange web of imagery." Pater, that is,

takes great pains to present himself as the "disinterested" reader of a fascinating, but limited, phenomenon.

This resistance breaks, however, and, like the reader of the tapestry in Auxerre, this figure from the past becomes "human" for Pater, at the same time that he says that Pico's thought has "little positive value":

> Above all, we have a constant sense in reading him, that his thoughts, however little their positive value may be, are connected with springs beneath them of deep and passionate emotion; and when he explains the grades or steps by which the soul passes from the love of a physical object to the love of unseen beauty, and unfolds the analogies between this process and other movements upward of human thought, there is a glow and vehemence in his words which remind one of the manner in which his own brief existence flamed itself away. (R 36)

Thus, Pater himself passes from a "distanced" examination into the biography of Pico Della Mirandola, and we find that the thought that had once struck Pater as curious pointed, finally, to a man with "springs . . . of deep and passionate emotion."

As we have seen, Burckhardt has a corrective for such contradictions in history and historical method. As time passes, the perspective of the historian widens and the *faits accompli* of history begin to merge, not rationally or logically, but by chronological distance. Thus, the edge and immediacy of contemporaneousness is removed:

> From a high and distant vantage point, such as a historian's ought to be, bells harmonize beautifully, regardless of whether they may be in disharmony when heard from close by: *Discordia concors*. (Judgements 158)

For Pater, time is too easily manipulated to provide such assurances, and the responsibility falls to the scholar and his "disinterest." Jules Michelet proposes another solution altogether: the past for the historian must always remain present.

Notes

1. For more on Burckhardt and *Kulturgeschichte*, as well as on Burckhardt's long friendship with Nietzsche, see Heller, The Disinherited Mind.

2. His last published work, Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860) was published thirty-seven years before his death.

3. Although this crucial pillar of Burckhardt's study remained unquestioned for quite a while, it has since been seriously questioned, beginning with Henri Thode's *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien* in 1885, which traced a Franciscan mysticism as a strong influence on early Renaissance art. Since then, the link between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that Burckhardt claimed did not exist has been firmly re-established. For more on this point, see Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought.

4. It should be noted that Michelangelo allegedly felt it prudent to go into hiding rather than refuse Pope Julius II's order to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

5. Norbrook's article--"Life and Death of Renaissance Man"--is indispensable to any discussion of Burckhardt's Renaissance Man. Norbrook's argument, in sum, is that while contemporary theory--particularly the New Historicism--attempts to displace the Burckhardtian concept of the individual, that many end up "replicating some of Burckhardt's own emphases" (100).

6. See note 3.

7. As I have suggested, Greenblatt's critique of Burckhardt along these lines is in some measure a rehearsal of others before him. See my discussion below on Pater's "critique" of Burckhardt's contentions of Renaissance art as secular.

8. That the Renaissance extended past Italy has been a familiar contention of historians since Michelet, from whom, among others (see Hill's notes in The Renaissance 303-5), Pater takes the notion that the Renaissance ends in France.

9. Burckhardt writings on the "great men" appears, for the most part, in a volume entitled Force and Freedom, which consisted of

> 1) A course entitled Introduction to the Study of History . . . held at the University [at Basle] in . . . 1868-1869, and again in 1870-1871;
>
> 2) A cycle of three lectures entitled The Great Men of History held at the museum of Basle in 1870;
>
> 3) A single lecture On Fortune and Misfortune in History also held at the Museum in 1871.
>
> The notes were prepared for publication after Burckhardt's death by his nephew . . . and gave the book the title *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*. (Force 371; editor's note)

It should be noted that these lectures were given after The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy--Burckhardt's last published work--appeared.

10. In his 1959 monograph, Walter Pater, Ian Fletcher suggests that Pater had read Burckhardt:

> In Burckhardt's famous Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860) Pater saw a way of concentrating on sudden luminous moments of a period, of a movement, rather than attempting to draw a flat systematic map of it. (quoted in Bloom 49-50)

But in her Walter Pater's Reading Billie Inman says that although their ideas are in some ways similar, "there is no evidence that he read Burckhardt" (221). In an earlier article, however, "Pater's Conception of the Renaissance," she draws a much more consequential connection between Pater and Burckhardt.

11. See Inman, Walter Pater's Reading 68-72.

12. Chapter Five of this study contains an extended discussion of Pater's notion of the mind as scientific instrument as well as a critique of this "objectivity through subjectivity."

13. For an account of the antecedents (of whom Burckhardt is not one) for Pater's use of the phrase "Christian art," see Donald L. Hall's "Critical and Explanatory Notes" in his edition of The Renaissance (300).

14. Pater cites this incident in his review of Symonds's Renaissance in Italy (1875) "as a specimen of Mr. Symonds's style."

15. I am thinking primarily of the formalism of Roger Fry here (Cezanne, Transformations, Vision and Design), although countless others could be said to be descendents of Pater's so-called formalism. For a discussion of how aesthetic criticism proceeds from Ruskin, through Pater, to Fry, see Fishman, The Interpretation of Art. For an influential critique of Fry's formalism, see Meyer Schapiro, "The Apples of Cezanne." Any list of more general critiques of formalism with pretensions to completeness would be too lengthy to include here, but a study well worth perusing is Lentricchia's celebrated After the New Criticism.

16. For more on Pico Della Mirandola and Burckhardt's conception of him, see Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos.

CHAPTER THREE

JULES MICHELET AND THE HISTORICISM OF EXHUMATION

Inscribed on Jules Michelet's tomb at Père-Lachaise in Paris are his own words: "*L'histoire est une resurrection.*" The statement is characteristic of Michelet: declarative, unequivocal, idealistic. He is as eager as Burckhardt is reluctant to march into a position that is easy to "deconstruct." If, for Burckhardt, it is folly for the historian to "take positions," not to do so, for Michelet, is politically and morally reprehensible. If Burckhardt is highly skeptical of systems that purport to unify history, Michelet stubbornly refuses to relinquish the idea that there is a completeness to history, even after the profound disillusionment he would suffer for this idealism. Whereas Burckhardt calls the notion of "rejuvenation through decay" a "barren argument," (Judgments 27), Michelet's method addresses itself to what Roland Barthes calls "a domestication of Death"--a "devouring" and re-socialization of the dead (Michelet 75).[1]

Since Michelet was born just after, and nurtured by the fallout of, The French Revolution, we can perhaps understand why resurrection might be so significant a term to a

historian allied to the ideals of the Revolution. For Michelet, history in fact reaches its "end" with the events of 1789. In its nascency, Revolution finally achieves what these long cultural and historical processes had been working towards. Any retreat from this pinnacle would thus be a move backwards in history. For Michelet, then, post-Revolution historiography had but one purpose: to return France, and thus the world, to that moment when "one idea rose with the dawn upon Paris, and all were changed with the same light. One light in the minds, and in each heart, one voice: Go, and you will take the Bastille!" (Histoire de la Révolution Française 184). To this end, he was unequivocal:

> May it be my part in the future, to have not attained, but marked the goal of history, to have called it a name that no else had. Thierry called it *narration*, and M. Guizot *analysis*. I have named it *resurrection*, and this name will remain. (Le Peuple xxxv)

Thus, Michelet is the complete exhumatory historicist. As Hayden White says, the aim of the Micheletist historian is to "identify with, resurrect, and relive the life of the past *in its totality*" (Metahistory 149). In seeking a future from the grave of the past, Michelet quite literally hopes to restore historically the kind of golden age of which Pater has shown his skepticism. Like Duke Carl's Germany, France's future could be found in only one direction: by discovering and correcting what was promised, and then lost during and after the Revolution. To this end, Michelet invents and develops himself as the definitive

Romantic figure: a guardian of The People whose task is not merely to describe history, but to create and direct it.

Despite such profound desires, however, history-as-resurrection for Michelet is nearly always a disappointment. In this way, Michelet's career and life follow the Romantic trajectory, comparable in its early stages to Wordsworth's own disillusionment with the failed promises of the Revolution. Tantalized with what he percieves as the once realized ideal, Michelet's voluminous production is an attempt to re-achieve that ideal. While he eventually realized, but never explicitly acknowledged, that this historical resurrection was impossible, Michelet never fully repudiated the ideals that he constructed around the events of 1789.

We might account for Michelet's obsession with this "realized ideal" with the fact that the events of the Revolution were in fact beyond his memory, and thus all the more alluring. While Michelet is considered a Romantic historian, we should note that he was born after all of the major figures of English Romanticism, and died twenty-four years after Wordsworth. Although I do not mean to conflate Victorian England with Second Empire France, Michelet's undiluted enthusiasm for the Revolution would seem increasingly out of place. Indeed, as White points out, by Michelet's death in 1874, his ideal based on the return of the Revolution was as "evanescent as the condition of

anarchy which it presupposed for its realization" (162). Nonetheless, in his work Michelet often literally waits for the Revolution to return and validate the unity of history that he would always refuse to disavow. In the following passage, Michelet attempts to give voice to The People's desire in 1784 (as well as his own in 1847) for the Revolution to come, or to be resurrected:

> Holy, holy Revolution, how slowly you come! . . . I who have waited for a thousand years, on the furrow of the Middle Ages, what! I still wait for you! . . . Oh! how slowly time moves! oh! how I have counted the hours! . . . Will you never arrive? (Révolution 80)

For Hayden White, this brand of Romanticism is unique to Michelet, chiefly because, despite appearances to the contrary, it challenges the received notion of Romanticism as the antithesis of realism:

> [Michelet] raise[d] the Romantic apprehension of the world to the status of a scientific insight. For him, poetic sensibility, critically self-conscious, provided the accesses to a specifically 'realistic' apprehension of the world. (149)

If by realism we mean a careful orchestration of the rhetoric of revelation, then Michelet does indeed have an amazing ability to create a frightening rendezvous of power, knowledge, and God. For White, however, Michelet is little interested in the rhetoricity of truth or realism. Michelet, in fact, is "no less interested in the truthful representation of the past . . . than was Ranke" (158). But rather than striving for a rigorously systematic and meticulous reconstruction of history "*wie es eigentlich*

ist," Michelet depends on "feeling," with himself as the powerful *amanuensis* of a more powerful guide.[2] For Michelet, this feeling, this resurrection of the emotional power that lead and will lead to revolution, is what creates history and reality, not grand systems.

Thus, Michelet's power is exercised by supplanting a systematic and exhaustive historicism with a kind of "instinctive" writing. Rather than a meticulous chronicle, his Histoire de la Révolution Française is an attempt to reconstruct those heady days in 1789. Michelet's nearly obsessive attention to a single event is often contrasted with dispatching larger stretches of time in a single paragraph, or skipping events altogether. In these cases, Michelet seems to relish his status as historian, recreating a reality that he was originally unable to see. As is the case whenever power gives way to pleasure in Michelet, however, he becomes skeptical and attempts to check his own power with frequent appeals to abstract entities:

> And as you are Justice, you will sustain me in this book, where my heart has cleared the path, never for my own interest, nor for any thought here on earth. You will be fair to me, and I will be fair to all . . . for whom, therefore, have I written this, if not for you, eternal Justice? (82)

Aside from functioning as a kind of studied humility, these addresses, instead of curbing this power, paradoxically reinforce the historian's position as the instinctive *amanuensis* of a transcendent will. Armed with this

redoubled power, Michelet then falls back into his text with an undiluted authority that is checked by another, more powerful, abstract entity: The People.

What Barthes describes as Michelet's belief in the "Infallibility of the People" manifests itself in the creation of this entity: an omnipotent and harmonized being. To this belief, there is a corollary: any individual interest that is separate from The People subverts the collective interest. If history is the successful and frustrated manifestations of these collective interests, then history for Michelet also seeks this unity and closure:

> You are correct to observe that our thoughts, communicated or not, always concur. We live from the same heart . . . Sweet harmony that can surprise; but is it not natural? All the variety of our works has sprung from the same living root: 'the feeling of France and the idea of *Patrie*.' (Le Peuple v)

Michelet thus "humanizes" history; he converts France into what Benedetto Croce aptly identifies as a "physical, intellectual and moral person" (24). The People is a manifestly moral construction, a single body conceived in "nature," an *être collectif* acting with the same instinct, an instinct that will propel it into a future free from history, time, and difference.

Indeed, Michelet conceives of himself as the guardian of the collective memory of The People, and he makes it his almost monomaniacal project to stoke the fires of the once and future Revolution at every possible opportunity.

Associated with this self-conception is an interesting permutation on the Wordsworthian obsession with preserving, by textualizing, memory. For both, this obsession stems from the horror that crucially seminal moments--in his own life, for Wordsworth, and in history, for Michelet--will somehow be lost in the collective memory. For example, Michelet recoils, and then recovers, at the specter of memory's loss:

> Forgotten! Terrible word. That one soul may perish among the souls! . . . He who God made for life, has he not the right therefore to live, at least in thought? Who will dare, on earth, to give even the most guilty this death beyond all deaths, the murder of memory?
>
> But no, do not believe it. Nothing is forgotten, no man, no thing. What has once existed cannot thus be nullified. (Révolution 72)

Nonetheless, there is in Michelet an implied skepticism to this belief that "nothing is forgotten." He could not trust that this ideal of the eternally preserved memory could be achieved without his prolific efforts. His continued assertion that The People were vastly more important than any one individual may be read as an attempt to bind up the forgotten people of history in the collective memory where they might, Michelet assumed, be resurrected from their anonymity. Thus, his own name would also be preserved.

To effect this desire to resurrect the individual memory into the memory of The People means, for Michelet, that the notion of a disinterested and relative position

must be jettisoned. Ignoring the voice of The People in favor of some intellectual ideal is not only objectionable, but impossible. Michelet, therefore, makes no pretense of making his discourse "balanced." His own history, he tells us, "is not impartial. It does not maintain a wise and prudent equilibrium between good and evil. On the contrary, it is frankly and vigorously partial, for right and truth" (Histoire de France, VII: 455). As his assumption that his side is the side of "right and truth" indicates, these are hardly private interests that take the place of this "equilibrium"; they are the "collective" interests that Michelet uses to subvert all others. Thus, Michelet sustains an equilibrium of his own between the figure of the solitary historian, and all the power that suggests, and the figure of The People, whose power absorbs the historian, even as it is created by him.[3]

This position of "right and truth" would be tested by the increasing disillusionment Michelet felt as The People moved, but did not progress, through the nineteenth century. When he completed the last volumes of his *Histoire du XIX siècle*, Michelet claimed that "[h]istory was over, and that he was the very last man in a mechanical world" (Barthes 20). Michelet who says in this preface that he is "holding up in the great machine" (XIX siècle, I: ix), finds himself almost completely powerless now, and speaks of several kinds of machines:

> One cannot comprehend a century merely by seeing it in its entirety. The enormous amount of facts about it would remain very obscure, if one did not return it to its general principle, the machine, and more crucially the human machine, *regimentation*. (x)

And where his faith in his own power to redirect historical justice was once seemingly unshakable, we find him at the mercy of the properly machine-like *Zeitgeist*, as he warns his readers that they will

> encounter a change of view, an enormous jump, an appalling depression. Is it my fault if [the book that I have written] is monstrous, discordant? No, it is fault of the God of this century, of his barbarous and murderous fatality. (xii-xiii)

Thus, the machinery that propels the progress that reaches its pinnacle with the storming of the Bastille in 1789 "advances" without "progressing," having already missed its goal:

> the future and the past both gave the same response; both said: Go! . . .
>
> And that which is beyond time, beyond the future and beyond the past, immutable Right said it also. (Révolution 186)

The time of the Bastille becomes the mark that is overshot, the point at which time consolidates and history ends. Thus Michelet becomes the champion of a Utopia that for him has already existed. His histories, then, are attempts to make the future into the past, to "exhume" the spirit of the Revolution:

> The State will be what it must be, a fraternal initiation, an education, a constant exchange of spontaneous beams of inspiration and faith in the multitude, and of the reflected lights of science

> and meditation which are found in our thinkers. (Révolution xxxviii-xxxix)

The notion that one can exhume or resurrect this moment from a frighteningly mechanized nineteenth century leads Michelet to question, if only temporarily, his own original conceptions, and we may read the following passage as if it were addressed to Michelet himself:

> Those who believe that the past contains the future, and that history is a river that runs interchangeably, rolling with the same waters, should reflect here and see that very often a century is opposed to the preceding century, and gives it occasionally a sharp contradiction. (Histoire du XIX siècle, I: ix)

The contradiction, or "correction," that each century "often" bestows upon the preceding century implies both conflict and political change. The idea that a *Zeitgeist* can be resurrected is problematized in Michelet's later writings by evidence that history is the story of conflict between collective wills, that the will to "right and truth" does not necessarily prevail, if indeed it ever had. On the other hand, it is nearly impossible to overlook the unequivocal, but paradoxical, notion of progress in Michelet's model of the river, a notion that Burckhardt and Pater resist and for which Carlyle finds no evidence. This "river," like the upward-reaching steps of the Hegelian dialectic, flows in one direction. The paradox for Michelet, of course, is that this forward movement becomes diverted at the very moment of its fruition.

For Barthes, other kinds of organic models are more useful in describing Michelet's notion of history. Micheletist history does not move dialectically--a movement that, in progressivist Hegelian terms, would make it unnecessary to interrogate or even really understand the past--but instead grows like a plant. History is "rather a continuity of identities, just as the plant or species is the continuation of the same tissue" (33). Elsewhere Barthes uses the image of a vast sea, much like the one that Burckhardt uses, to describe an enterprise that threatens to consume:

> Micheletist history advances in waves: the narrative is always carried to a revelation, and the tableau is never closed, it has for its end an anxiety, the humiliated incarnation of the historian's reprise, or of a suffocating oarsman or, if you will, of a god returning to his Passion. (21)

Like the model of the river that Michelet at once endorses and "corrects," both of Barthes models frustrate closure. Structurally organic and unimpeded, these models exist in stark constrast to the mechanical and "discordant" terms that Michelet uses to describe contemporary history. Instead of contradicting Michelet's organicism, though, his reaction indicates his alliegance to a method that subverts this mechanical "fatality."

If Micheletist history can be usefully described with models that illustrate organic possibilities, then perhaps an even more useful extension of these models would be that

of exhumation. Although Michelet's instinctive, anti-systematic historicism suggests a free form reaching for some future fulfillment, implicit in this act is an obsessive interrogation and desire for the past. Michelet's use of the exhumatory model is not merely facile and convenient; he both literally and figurately visits and questions the dead for answers for the creation of a history that had never been, and to represent The People who had been "forgotten."

For Barthes, the literal part of this model is crucial. Michelet is the "eater of history," the predator face to face with the prey of history. His is also the portrait of a Michelet trapped in history: one who is forced to continue his vampiric search for nourishment in a history that, instead of satisfying, only creates the desire for more. The many dead, and particularly the exhumed figure, represent the hint of another history, an eternal realm, at the same time that they represent a physical presence that is still with him. While some may find a mark of desperation in the figure of Michelet's interrogation of the dead, it is also the mark of Michelet again as the conductor of history:

> If these laid out, still warm dead are saved from nothingness, it is because Michelet has already considered them, the historian has already taken charge, he has already explained their lives to them. He pulled from them one brutish, blind, disorderly, incomplete, absurd life, and gave back to them a clear life, a full life, embellished by an ultimate historical signification, connected to

> the great living (that is to say genetic) cloth of History.
>
> The historian therefore is the one who has reversed Time, who returns to the place of the dead and recommences their lives in a clear and useful sense. (Barthes 74-5)

Exhumation as Historicism

Michelet attended at least four exhumations during his lifetime.[4] In his journal, each exhumation is marked both by graphic descriptions of the condition of the corpses and by his own omnipresent figure peering into the grave, always scrutinizing the body as it is pulled up with the same painstaking detail, literally trying to "read" the corpse, as if it contained some knowledge that he had missed during its life, as in this excerpted description of his wife Pauline's exhumation forty-two days after she was first buried:

> *4 September 1839, Wednesday*
> *Exhumation: 8:00 a.m. Stormy morning, after the rain.*
>
> Severe ordeal. Alas! I scarcely saw anything but worms. It is said: 'returned to the earth.' It is a figure of speech. *The corpse's inanimate substance reanimates a living substance.* That aspect is hideous to the eye, harsh as Christian humiliation, great, cruelly poetic and philosophical for the mind. . . .
>
> The body's shape was better preserved under the shroud; greenish, but already harshly projecting or heavily round, like something that collapses . . .
>
> . . . However, when I observed the gaping grave from above, I powerfully felt, as I have felt on the sea or from the top of a tower, the attraction of death! . . .
>
> Farewell. I must abstain even from writing about this *sad and too alluring subject.* In order to obey her, I must force myself to subdue even my regrets, to think of them less, *in order to live*

> *and continue her thought* . . . (Mother Death 89-90; emphasis added)[5]

There is little ambiguity here in Michelet's tension between the possibilities of the living and the forgotten dead who, by simple virtue of their death, contain crucial mysteries. Michelet is equally clear on the manner in which this physical exhumation may be imported into historical inquiry:

> Never in my career, have I lost sight of the duty of the Historian. I have given to many of the too-forgotten dead the assistance that I myself will need.
>
> I have exhumed them for a second life . . .
>
> History greets and renews these disinherited glories; it gives life to these dead, resuscitates them. (XIX Siècle, II: iii-iv)

What is at least on a physical level impossible, Michelet sees as necessary in historiography. Indeed, whether it is "possible" or not is not a consideration--"I *have* exhumed them." The *fait accompli* of historical exhumation finds its power in discourse. The intangibility of discourse is at once the opposition to and conqueror of the physical helplessness of the graveside mourner. By performing these acts of historical exhumation, Michelet retains the attenuating hope that in the act of "resurrecting" one person is contained the possibility of remotivating the ideals of the past. Such an aim is intensely personal; in future years, he hopes, others will provide "the assistance that [he himself] will need."

The People notwithstanding, Michelet is the most important figure in this historical *tableau*. He is the

agency generating commerce between the dead and the living, keeping his handiwork in evidence with his liberal use of the first person. Textual production does not, after all, emerge from an authorless vacuum, he says in his 1847 Preface to Histoire de la Révolution Française, and his position between these two worlds is a crucial condition of the history that he is about to relate, and thus resurrect:

> Several of these grave questions, that have obliged me so profoundly to explore my faith, they have struggled within me during the most grave circumstance of human life, between death and the funeral, when the survivor, already partly dead, has been sitting in judgment between two worlds. (Révolution xlvi)[6]

Michelet as "survivor," then, creates a position that for all its "gravity" allows Michelet as historian to bear witness from both worlds. What Michelet sees in these dead figures are the disappearing pieces of an immense *tableau* that Michelet desperately attempts to reassemble at the same time that he knows that such a project may never be realized.

Even as early as his famous translation of Vico's *La Scienza Nuova* Michelet showed a willingness to exploit the power of this exhumatory imagery. In his introduction, Michelet describes the historical enactment of a familiar image of resurrection: "When the nations finally manage to destroy themselves, they have dispersed themselves into oblivion . . . and the phoenix of society is reborn from the ashes" (XLVI). Because this image comes so early in

Michelet's career, it is noteworthy both for its resemblance to images of resurrection elsewhere in his thought, and for its acknowledgement of the inevitability of the violence about which he would later voice his incredulity. In this way, the image contrasts strikingly with the tenativeness of the image of him peering into his wife's grave. The earlier idealism that manifests itself in a kind of spiritual certitude is transformed into a materiality that questions such certitude. The phoenix explodes from the weightless ashes while heavy dirt bears down on and systematically destroys the corpse. The passive gaze into the grave guarantees no material rebirth or renewal.

It is Michelet's turn to discourse after this failure of renewal, then, that is significant here. In history, what has been lost can be recovered, reconstructed, and represented, like the phoenix, in its brand new completeness. "Nothing," after all, "is forgotten, no man, no thing. What has once existed cannot thus be nullified."

In an article entitled "History as Palingenesis in Pater and Hegel," William Shuter traces similar phoenix images in Pater. Cultural palingenesis, the emergence of a new culture from the destruction of a previous one, is an important subtext to the Hegelian dialectic. Shuter shows how images of this metempsychosis can be found throughout Pater's work. One of Shuter's examples, from the "Winckelmann" essay, is especially useful in helping us to

identify the differences between Pater's image of resurrection and Michelet's. Winckelmann, Pater says,

> seems to realise that fancy of the reminiscence of a forgotten knowledge hidden for a time in the mind itself; as if the mind of one, lover and philosopher at once in some phase of pre-existence . . . fallen into a new cycle, were beginning its intellectual career over again, yet with a certain of Goethe's judgments on his works; they are a life, a living thing, designed for those who are alive. . . . (R 155).

At its most obvious level, the difference between Michelet's imagery and Pater's is that while Michelet nearly always speaks within a political and material context, Pater's image depicts a sensual, intellectual, decidely non-material resurrection. While Michelet conversion of the material exhumation to a discursive one is an implicitly metaphysical one, his imagery is nonetheless grounded, as it were, in a graphically material model. Pater stops short of identifying this "pre-existence" as coming from the world of the dead. Indeed, he qualifies this image by reminding us that Winckelmann's "new cycle" is perhaps independent of its antecedents, and that only the "living" can lay any real claim to it.

Several significant contrasts to this "spiritual" exhumation of Pater's come to mind, most notably the one I have devoted so much time to in this study: the undeniably material exhumation of Duke Carl and his bride. Nonetheless, there remains differing aims between Pater and Michelet in the use of the exhumatory model. The exhumed

figures of Duke Carl and his bride, for instance, are "fictional," which is to say that Pater's interest in exhuming them does not appear, at first glance, to be in restoring forgotten, but important figures to the pages of German Enlightenment history. Although vague connections between the character of Duke Carl and both Winckelmann and King Ludwig II have been made, Pater does not preside, in the same way that Michelet does, over Duke Carl's *accidental* exhumation with promises of historical recuperation.

Both writers, however, choose the unearthing of corpses, of "physical" testimony, to expose the demands of history. Although both differ radically in terms of what is at stake in this unearthing, there remains the shared desire to force "open" questions--such as these issues of historical representation and reconstruction--which are too easily camouflaged in historical inquiry. For Pater, as we have seen, such questions expand far beyond his interest in simplifying them. The mystification of these historical bodies, in other words, and the mystified effect they produce on the living--leaving the grave open, so to speak--is far more interesting and crucial to his brand of historicism than the need for ready answers. For Michelet, these questions both nourish and frustrate a historical ideal whose answers seem alternatively necessary and untenable.

The Individual and The People

Raymond Williams's portrait of Walter Pater in his immensely influential study, Culture and Society, is of an anachronistic Romantic, a critic whose eyes have been glazed over by a steady diet of what John Stuart Mill calls a "culture of the feelings":

> . . . what was called, from Pater in the late 'sixties, the new doctrine of 'art for art's sake', was really little more than a restatement of an attitude which properly belongs to the first generations of the Romantics. . . . This is particularly evident in the case of Pater, whose ideas, when visible through the gauze, are the ideas of Wordsworth, of Shelley, and of Arnold. (166)[7]

Williams' Pater is curiously Anglophilic, even chauvinistic, for nowhere does he suggest in the three pages that he devotes to Pater the influence of any other possible Romantic traditions, the German and the French, for instance, to which Pater's ideas arguably owe a greater allegiance. Although Pater was indeed well read in the works of English Romanticism, he also read, among many others, Goethe, Fichte, and Hegel, Renan, Quinet, and particularly Michelet.

Pater probably read Michelet's *La Renaissance*--the first attempt to isolate the Renaissance as a separate area of historical inquiry--in 1864, nine years before he published his own study of the Renaissance.[8] Michelet proposed that while the Renaissance of the fifteenth century took place in Italy, it could not have occurred without the

influence of France, and it is this version of the Renaissance that Pater has in mind when he says, in the first chapter of The Renaissance, "Two Early French Stories," that insofar as there was an earlier French version of the Renaissance, it was "a brilliant, but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done in the fifteenth [century]".[9] For Pater, "the history of the Renaissance ends in France" (R 1). And it is through France, we may remember, that Duke Carl looks to bring "Apollo and his lyre to Germany."

Nonetheless, if Pater concedes to Michelet the intellectual and cultural influence of France in the Renaissance, we find Michelet's notions of the meaning of the Renaissance checked by Pater at nearly every turn. It should not surprise us that Michelet sees in the Renaissance the emergence of liberty and "the idea of progress . . . and the positive assertion, inspired by his reading of Vico, that man was free to create his own destiny" (Williams, Critic 23). Indeed, it is not too difficult to see, in this Renaissance, cultural conditions in their nascency that lead to the storming of the Bastille in France three centuries later. This new liberty manifests itself in particularized instances, such as the example that closes Michelet's volume on the Renaissance: "Vinci purchased some birds to put them outside the cage and revelled in the rapture of liberty." This *Zeitgeist* also crosses national lines as "the

Marguerite of Marguerites, gathering to her bosom those who no longer have a home, founded the first shelter for deserted orphans in Paris" (France, V: 344).

In a review essay in 1875, however, Pater offers an alternative to this humanistic notion of liberty in his own aesthetic one:

> The Renaissance is assertion of liberty indeed, but of liberty to see and feel those things the seeing and feeling of which generate . . . a sympathy with life everywhere, even in its weakest and most frail manifestations. Sympathy, appreciation, a sense of latent claims in things which even ordinary good men pass rudely by--these on the whole are the characteristic traits of the artists. ("Symonds" 105)

While both versions of "liberty" involve "sympathy"--defined here as the opposition to political and aesthetic tyranny--Pater clearly does not find the same political urgency in the concept of liberty as does Michelet. It is this conflict between politics and aesthetics that finds the two at odds most often. Pater's Raphael, for example, is the consummate scholar-artist, concerned with the "accumulation" of "knowledge for its own sake," an artist constantly in the process of disinterestedly "substitut[ing] himself," a painter who, though somewhat pedestrian in his vision, is "the analyst, the faithful reporter, in his work, of what he *sees*" (MS 38, 40, 50).[10] The very qualities of this artist-as-scholar, qualities with which Pater nearing the end of his life as a scholar no doubt felt a certain sympathy, Michelet criticizes in his version of Raphael:

> Art then retreats from life, the struggles and misfortunes of the times, retrenches itself in indifference. For me, so much an admirer of this man, this great school, we call Raphaël, who covered the world in paintings, I am astonished by his quietude, by his serenity in the midst of the most tragic of events. These impassive madonnas, did they know that their living sisters endured Borgia, the sack of Forli, of Capoue? These philosophers of The School of Athens, can they reason, calculate, on the day of the sack of Brescia, at the hour when a madman strikes the breast of his dying mother? . . . And finally this Psyche, painted twice by Raphaël with so many of the charms of her long history, did she not hear the frightful cry of Milan, tortured by the Spanish who will be in Rome tomorrow? (France, V: 272-3)

To a certain extent, Pater's portrait of Raphael answers the questions that Michelet's portrait raises. The "absences" that Michelet finds in the work of Raphael imply some lack of political or historical intuition in the painter. Since Michelet assumes that this intuition is inherent in every human being, this lack confuses him. He also assumes a historical authority manifested in the Burckhardtian distance from the historical events that he cites and in the past, present, and future tenses that he moves between. Pater's portrait of Raphael, the scholar whose vision comes from absorbing the work of others, indicates that such political "feeling," if indeed it ever existed, is one of the first things to be eliminated when one dedicates his life to imitating or studying the works of others.

Perhaps Michelet's complaint stems from what he sees as Raphael's insistence on remaining a personality that separates art from "the struggles and misfortunes" of The

People. While such a separation, according to Michelet, is always a grievous error, Raphael's participation in this separation is particularly upsetting for Michelet. It is precisely because he sees The People implicated, but not properly represented, in Raphael's work that frustrates him. Michelet's Raphael is not Pater's "faithful reporter," because Raphael, as Michelet implies, ignores what should be historically obvious precisely because he has been lured into the cult of the individual.

Indeed, as a historian of Western Civilization, a collection of cultures that have constructed themselves around the worship of heroes, Michelet finds that he must concede, despite his protests, that the individual in history in some measure exists:

> Each man is a humanity, a universal history . . . and yet this being, who held an infinite generality within him, was at the same time a special individual, a unique being, irreparable, that nothing will replace. (France, III: 177)

The crucial distinction here is that this "unique being" contains what Michelet cannot find in Raphael, this "generality," this invisible, political connection to other individuals that allows them to act in concert. Michelet's individual, in this way, differs markedly from Burckhardt's; Michelet's indivdual represents a race, while Burckhardt's represents an autonomous entity.

This notion of the particular and the universal as contained within the individual is Michelet's version of the

Great Man Theory. In a reading that draws him closer to Carlyle and Emerson, he grants that while such figures as Voltaire and Rousseau at one time "stood alone," in Rousseau's case, at least, "the next day, the entire world was with him" (Révolution xxxvi). But Michelet does not concede that the success of such individuals involves one actor bending The People to his will. Instead, such cases indicate that the will of The People was already in place, and that the individual "standing alone" was merely the catalyst. With this reasoning, Michelet sharply checks the Great Man's progress whenever possible:

> I also saw that these brilliant, powerful speakers, who voiced the thought of the masses, are wrongly considered to be the sole actors. They have received the impulse more than they have given it. The principal actor is the people. (Révolution xliv)

He goes on, in this attempt to correct the wrongs that such hero worship has brought us, to re-assert his own powerful position as historian, and as a figure who ironically sets himself apart from The People:

> In order to recover the people and restore [the people] to their role, I had to recall to their proper proportions these ambitious puppets . . . in whom until now, the people searched for, and believed to see, the secret game of history. (xliv)

At the same time, then, that he decries the cult of the individual, Michelet becomes the hero in his own history, the one whose head extends above the crowd, performing what Roland Barthes describes as "heroization":

> Heroization is the power to see and resuscitate Justice in History, which is the proper function of the Magus: to have attained by certain readings a superior zone of knowledge, Michelet makes himself the conductor of the Just, husband and father of History. (52-3)

While he proclaims his ability to "roll back the ambitious marionettes" of history, however, he also scrambles, as in his preface to Le Peuple, to establish his credentials as a member of The People, no less concerned with materiality than they are, indeed, no less a manual laborer than they are. The difference is that, instead of shoveling dirt, he assembles the "letters" of his texts long before his ideas are in place, waiting for the impulse to seize him, the expectant amanuensis, and thus begin to form these letters into words and then into ideas (vi).

If the precarious position of the individual in the populism of Micheletist history leads him to such crises of identity, we find no such quandary in Pater. Although Raymond Williams claims that Pater is "enrolled in the Grand Old Cause" of Arnoldian culture, Pater shies away from such overt allegiances. And if Williams implies here that Pater is teleological in spite of himself, one need only point to the many instances where Pater takes pains to situate historically the writers that have influenced him the most. Take, for instance, Plato, whose ideas, Pater says, have no access to immediate truth but must be subjected to the historic reading or, in his words, the only "really critical study of him" (PP 11), or Hegel, whose historical method

described in The Renaissance is only one of many possible ways of approaching the Renaissance.

In other words, no obstinate and ultimately frustrating loyalty to the causes of The People such as haunted Michelet stands in the way of Pater's unabashed "appreciation" of the individual in history. Not only are Pater's subjects "individuals," but alienated ones, romanticized artists or thinkers whose separation from the masses is the very thing that produces their genius. Yet it is this approach to the individual in history that at once entirely opposes and reproduces Michelet's conviction in "the infallibility of the People."

By dividing his thought into individual appreciations, into essays, by resisting totalizing conceptions of history and culture--compared to, say, Michelet's eighteen-volume *Histoire de France*--Pater manages to parcel his concentration into segments that require no grand scheme. This is certainly not to say, as we will see in his pronouncements on the French Revolution, that Pater is somehow free from ideology. By dividing his concentration, however, he is able to scatter his interests so as to provide the illusion of disinterest. Only in this qualified way does Pater, as Williams suggests, continue the Romantic notion of the figure alienated both from his society and from the collective mindset.

have seen, that Pater is by any means rigidly chronological, as evidenced by his frequent *in medias res* parallels between Ancient Rome and nineteenth-century Europe in Marius the Epicurean. Nor would he openly criticize those historical writers who themselves indulge in this kind of nostalgic idealism. So it is uncharacteristic indeed when, in a signed review tucked away in the pages of Nineteenth Century in 1889, five years before his death, Pater comes out so strongly against "that blind conflict labelled historically as *The French Revolution*," and especially the dubious legacies that conflict left to the nineteenth century (117):

> One thing, certainly, the Revolution left to the century which followed it--a large stock, not merely of questionable abstract propositions, but also of abstract terms of very doubtful serviceableness in the study of history. Abstract terms like *Liberty*, *Democracy*, *Atheism*--abstract propositions about them in whatever interest, make one think sometimes of those worn old screws which turn either way with equal facility, and compact nothing. (120)

What is interesting about this review is not so much that it amounts to a frontal attack on the prime vehicle of Micheletist ideals. Michelet himself, after all, certainly realized that these ideals had disintegrated almost as soon as they were manifested. The difference lies rather in the historical maneuvers that each writer makes in response to the fall of the Revolution. Michelet's reaction requires an obstinate, if disappointed, sifting through the ashes for some new *renaissance*--even as he opposes the *fatalité* of the nineteenth century to the *liberté* of the eighteenth.

Although he would not address the specificities of the future, he still maintained, to the very end, that "the past contains the future" (XIXe Siècle, I: ix). Pater does not have nearly as much at stake in the French Revolution; his gesture is to sweep it clean, along with the useless terms it leaves in its wake. Keeping that particular ghost alive was to offend not only chronology, but also meant to sustain an ideology that had become increasingly pathetic and inefficacious. If this was not the case in late nineteenth-century France, than it certainly was in late Victorian England, where the assaults of science, "Unbelief," and history scored palpable hits.

Art in History

Similar differences both unite and divide Pater and Michelet on the role of art in history and in aesthetics. As we have seen in his reaction to Raphael, a palpable anxiety and distrust lies beneath Michelet's discussion of art. Art, for Michelet, encourages a separation between the artist and his production, and thus between his production and the political life of The People. As Barthes points out:

> Art is an isolator . . . , it prevents two organisms from joining and mutually fortifying each other: the historian can no longer feed on History; but only look at it, and slide on it like the length of a smooth film, brilliant and sterile. Art puts history on show and makes the historian a writer. An inevitability from which Michelet could only try to rid himself. (23)

The plastic arts too easily become, for Michelet, ornamental signifiers separated from the signifieds of history, a separated form from which we can too easily eliminate the contexts of its production.

Perhaps what becomes a more menacing anxiety for Michelet is that artistic production becomes objectified, and as such can slip from the control of both the historian and the artist, as is the case with Leonardo da Vinci and his *La Gioconda*, a painting in which both Michelet and Pater detect a similar supernatural allure:

> Be careful. Vinci himself, the great master of illusion, was trapped in his own snare; for many years he stayed there, forever powerless to leave this mobile labyrinth, fluid and changing, as he had painted after all a dangerous portrait. (France, V: 83)

The same seduction that renders da Vinci "powerless" can happen to the historian. For Michelet, this is a loss of much more consequence. As Michelet guides us through the Louvre, for example, (where the crowning achievements of Italian art have come, in the end, under French control), the paintings begin to "sirenize" him:

> . . . an infinity acts upon you with a strange magnetism. Art, nature, the future, genius and mystery and the discovery, master of the depths of the world, of the unknown abyss of the ages, speak, what do you want from me? This canvas attracts me, calls me, invades me, absorbs me; I am going to it despite myself, like a bird to a serpent. (82)

The "smooth film" that divides him from the product not only prevents the nearly physical apprehension of history that

Michelet requires, but creates the desire that threatens to topple his assumptions. Thus the ability to construct art, and specifically painting, as a type of sorcery have access to some hidden historical source to which even the historian is not privy. The power that access represents also drains the power that Michelet has so carefully cultivated. He discovers, to his horror, that it may be possible for art to exist outside of history, outside the *terra firma* of The People, into whom he can always retreat.

Pater endows the historian with no such power. The threat in his infamous reading of the same portrait thus becomes gradually diminished; the figure of Mona Lisa herself becomes "individualized" to the point where all history and mythology become merely the "sounds of lyres and flutes" to her. The same thing has occurred with Pater's *La Gioconda* as in Michelet's reading: the power of the painting has become radically separated from the control of the reader. Since this control is not as necessary for Pater, the threat of its loss is exhilirating rather than frightening. For Michelet, the historian who has set up his function as the corrector of history's sins, the director of Justice, it is understandable that so strong a force is a threat.

It should not surprise us, then, that architecture--tactile, three-dimensional, functional--does not inspire the same distrust in Michelet. Instead he approaches, for

instance, Gothic architecture with the unqualified awe of the supplicant. This position is facilitated by what he sees as the cathedral's *raison d'etre*: a place where The People congregate, a place that they can use. The cathedral has somehow managed to retain the "presence" of The People. Where the painter is ignorant and cowed by his own creation, the builder of cathedrals is spiritualized by his materiality:

> Touch these stones with caution, walk slowly on these flagstones. A great mystery has happened here. I see nothing but death, and I am tempted to weep. . . . The cathedrals of Paris, of Saint-Denis, of Reims, say more than the longest narratives. The stone is animated and spiritualized under the ardent and severe hand of the artist. The artist makes it gush life. (France, IV: 509-10)

Becoming overpowered here is clearly not the threat it is with painting. Here, he is "tempted" to cry, and although he detects an undeniable power, the cathedral experience lies within the confines of his established definitions for history. Form, as he sees it, is inseparable from its function.

Of the French cathedrals, Pater claims that, at least in Notre Dame D'Amiens, "at one view the whole is visible, intelligible . . . There is no mystery here . . . " (MS 113). The transcendent force that Michelet detects by touching the stones is subverted in Pater's reaction by two precepts:

> We are reminded that after all we must of necessity look on the great churches of the Middle

> Age with other eyes than those who built or first worshipped in them; that there is something verily worth having, and a just equivalent for something else lost, in the mere effect of time, and that the salt of all aesthetic study is in the question,--What, precisely what, is this to *me*? (117)

Echoing his own words from the Preface to The Renaissance more than twenty years after he wrote them, he replies that the reader as a subject *in* history, and thus as a representation of a historically specific reaction, prevents the possibility of any "readings" or reactions that transcend that subject, and thus history.

While Pater here in 1894, the last year of his life, seeks to "disinterest" himself to the extent that his aesthetic reactions appear as "scientific" as possible, he completes a process that arguably had begun with the first critical reactions to his reading of *La Gioconda*. He has refined himself out of existence. He has distilled the effusiveness of Romanticism and thus has recuperated the phrase ("what is this to me?") that had brought him so much criticism, into a comparatively new, Late Victorian critical climate. Whereas his first use of it provides an alternative to the Arnoldian notion of the "thing in itself," in "Notre Dame D'Amiens" the phrase is reconfigured to address the impossibility of historical reconciliation. At the same time, it speaks of the necessity for a historical and radically contextualized reading. By re-using his phrase in this way, he thus provides an example of

the point he is making: history effects language, even those phrases that *seem* the same. Ironically, such an example requires a stance that moves linguistically between the very contexts that he claims to be separate.

Prose

As we have seen in our discussion of Burckhardt, prose, for Pater, is uniquely empowered to perform these historical maneuvers. Prose is not only *the* mode of intellectual discourse, but the prose writer works with the knowledge that he is mediating "facts." Indeed, history proceeds from the "writer's sense of fact" (A 9). For Michelet, the power of prose lies in its political uses:

> . . . prose, of all forms is the least figurative and the least concrete, the most abstract, the most pure, the most transparent; in other words, the least material, the most free, the most common to all men, the most *human*. Prose is the last form of thought, the furthest remove from vague and inactive dreams, the closest to action. The transition from mere symbolism to mute poetry, from poetry to prose, is the progress towards the equality of minds; it is an intellectual levelling. ("Introduction a l'Histoire Universelle" 65-6)

In this seemingly contradictory definition, prose is at once the most abstract, the least material, and the most human. The very fact that it is accessible to more of The People, that it is in fact the "most human" raises it head and shoulders above the more exclusive art forms.

Perhaps the most significant quality that Michelet lists is prose's transparency. Unlike painting, which

operates within "the unknown abyss of the ages," supernatural depths that attract and then threaten, prose betrays no mystery, no threat of knowledge over which he has no control. While we can see how prose, so defined, is useful to Michelet's project, his own idiosyncratic style would seem to make his own prose somewhat less than "transparent." That is, what we see "through" his prose is the figure of Michelet-as-writer, as actor-in-history, behind the very transparency through which we are supposed to view history. We see him, for instance, weeping in cathedrals, confessing tragedies, praying, admonishing, and so on. He makes himself the only actor, the only constant, in the immense narrative that is his *oeuvre*, the only element with pretensions to providing the historical unity that he so often claims of history. Thus, he reproduces repeatedly Pater's historian, the artist whose medium is "the writer's sense of fact."

In Barthes' discussion of Michelet's "style," this lack of transparency may have more to do with the attack with which Michelet approaches history:

> Michelet's discourse--what one calls ordinarily calls style--is precisely that sort of concerted navigation that will bring History and its narrator face to face, like a fish and his prey. . . . This voration, for Michelet, consists in substituting for the cadences of noble oratory art, blunt incisions, interpellations . . . (22)

Barthes reading of Michelet's style is predicated on a separation between the historian as "devourer" consuming the

"devoured" of history. There is a mark of symbiotic desperation to such a relationship: "Michelet prepares his physical weakness like that of a parasite, that is to say that he installs himself, grows in it, and, existing only within, invades it triumphantly" (18). This desperation is marked by a terrifying and inevitable separation between Michelet and history, and it is Barthes' contention that Michelet's interruptory style is complicit in this separation.

In this way, Barthes' portrait of Michelet as the eater of history, the predator face to face with the prey of history, is also the portrait of Michelet trapped in history: one who is forced to continue his search for nourishment in a history that, instead of satisfying, only creates the desire for more. In the preface to his final work, Histoire du XIXe Siècle, for example, he sets up the context of his work in terms of his own presence within the events of "this terrible century" (ix). More crucially, Michelet implies that the significance of these events, the thing that binds them all together, is that they occurred "after [his] birth" and "before [his] death"--as if now he realizes that only by not existing would he be able to break from the history that had now become a "machine." Added to this tableau is the figure of Michelet standing over the newly emptied graves of his wife, father, and friends, where

he "powerfully" feels "the attraction of death"--an attraction that he would reiterate many times.

The many dead, and particularly the exhumed figure, represent the hint of another history, an eternal realm, at the same time that they represent a physical presence that is still with him. While some may find a mark of desperation in the figure of Michelet (sometimes literally) interrogating the dead, it is also the mark of Michelet as the conductor of history:

> If these laid out, still warm dead are saved from nothingness, it is that Michelet has already considered them, already the historian has taken charge, he has already explained their lives to them. He pulled from them one brutish, blind, disorderly, incomplete, absurd life, and gave back to them a clear life, a full life, embellished by an ultimate historical signification, connected to the great living cloth (that is to say genetic) of History.
>
> The historian therefore is the one who has reversed Time, who returns to the place of the dead and recommences their lives in a clear and useful sense. (Barthes 74-5)

Notes

1. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

2. A correlative motif of the amanuensis in English Romanticism may be said to be the Eolian lute, lyre, or harp--an stringed instrument placed in the path of the wind, so that one could hear the "music of Nature." For more on this subject see Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp"; Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"; and Geoffrey Grigson's _The Harp of Aeolus and other Essays_.

3. In this way, the novel for Michelet is

> the contrary of history, not only because it subordinates the great collective interests to an individual destiny, but because it does not honor

> the paths of that difficult preparation that in history produces things. (Bible de l'humanité 403)

4. Those of Furcy Michelet, his father; Pauline, his wife; Paul Poinsot, his friend; and of his baby son, whom he had named Lazare (Lazarus).

5. Translated by Edward K. Kaplan.

6. Michelet is most likely speaking of his father here, who died in 1846, shortly after which Michelet began writing his Révolution.

7. A.O.J. Cockshut offers a modification of this Pater-Romanticism alliance. He claims that, although Romanticism had been subjected to the utilitarian critique, "its assumptions were hardly questioned from within, until the early writings of Pater, culminating in The Renaissance (1873)" (81).

8. See Ferguson (173), and Inman, Reading (284).

9. Both Billie Inman and Donald Hill also see this as a reference to Michelet, but Hill also cites Ernest Renan.

10. It should be noted that this description of Raphael comes late in Pater's life in 1892, eighteen years after the publication of The Renaissance.

11. Whereas in Carlyle, Pater, and Burckhardt there is no mistaking that the "he" or "man" represented is indeed exclusively male, we cannot make such a claim for Michelet. Including in his voluminous *oeuvre* are several volumes dealing exclusively with the figure of the woman in history, such as Du prêtre, la femme, et la famille (1845), Les femmes de la Révolution (1854), and La femme (1859). Indeed, he claimed that "I am a complete man having two sexes of the mind." This phrase is quoted from Roland Barthes' indispensable study on Michelet, which is particularly useful for any study of Michelet and gender. See also Barthes' essay on Michelet's La Sorcière in his Essais critiques.

CHAPTER FOUR

THOMAS CARLYLE AND HISTORICISM AS BIOGRAPHY

The Facts of Biographical Genius

In 1824, Thomas Carlyle, then twenty-eight, writes these words to the seventy-five year old Goethe: "Many saints have been expunged from my literary Calendar since I first knew you; but your name still stands there, in characters more bright than ever" (Goethe Correspondence 2). Such an encomium not only recalls the quote from "On History," obligatory to any discussion of Carlyle--"History is the essence of innumerable Biographies"--but betrays the conviction that biography can be *experienced*, a possibility that he describes in his "Biography" essay (1832):

> How inexpressibly comfortable to know our fellow-creature; to see into him, understand his goings-forth, decipher the whole heart of his mystery: nay, not only to see into him, but even to see out of him, to view the world as he views it. (Essays, III: 44)

Such knowledge is complete and apparently unmediated. It is also fully subjective, a merging of consciousnesses that obliterates chronological time at the same that it seeks to define history. In Raymond Williams's words we, "[l]acking live men . . . enter a social contract with a

biography." Like Michelet, the Carlylian historian is a "man entering into personal relations with history, setting up house with the illustrious dead" (77). As in Michelet's writings, the secrets of history that die with these men can be uncovered. The Micheletist concept of The People, however, is not to be found in Carlyle. During the tumults of the French Revolution, for example, the people, instead of forming a concerted body in the midst of the conflagration, are curiously particularized. Although Carlyle includes them in his history, they are often separated from the loud machinations, the action, of history: "City of all the Devils! In remote streets, men are drinking breakfast-coffee; following their affairs; with a start now and then, as some dull echo reverberates a note louder" (French Revolution, II: 111).

Further separated from the coffee-drinkers of history are the Great Men who are "sent into the world" to compose "Universal History" (Heroes and Hero-Worship 1-2). Among other things, the distinguishing characteristics of the Great Man are his marked difference from the concerns and banalities of the masses and his inability to exist within the confines of his historical and cultural position. Thus, the beheading of Charles I by Oliver Cromwell and his men is not just the killing of a monarch, but the most complete and audacious destruction of historical context ever attempted, an act so foreign to us non-Greats that

> [w]e know it not, this atrocity of the English Regicides; shall never know it. I reckon it perhaps the most daring action any Body of Men to be met with in History ever, with clear consciousness, deliberately set themselves to do. (Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches 350).

The "modern reader," says Carlyle, has nothing to compare it to and, he suggests, we would never be able to locate the source of the act itself, so far is it removed from our concerns. What does the modern man know, after all, with all his cant and uncertainty, about "English Puritanism, the last of all our Heroisms"? (2).

As the "expunged" saints from Carlyle's literary calendar attest, however, locating or defining these Great Men is not the self-evident process that it may at first seem, especially since there is a tendency, in reading Carlyle, to assume univocity in positions that he would undercut, problematize, or refine--at the same time that he would insist on their absoluteness. And while Carlyle would often repeat that biography is "the one thing needful," determining what constitutes that "one thing" is a labyrinthine process (Essays, III: 45).

This "one thing needful," for Carlyle, is often "facts," especially when, taking a page from the age-old critique of poetry, he compares them to the lies of fiction. Even the "grandest *fictitious event*" collapses under the truth of even the least consequential fact (Essays, III: 54). If these facts present themselves as self-evident in Carlyle's formulations of them, however, such a position is

nonetheless qualified by a dependency on the reading of those facts:

> Half the effect, we already perceive, depends on the object; on its being *real*, on its being really *seen*. The other half will depend on the observer; and the question now is: How are real objects to be *so* seen; on what quality of observing, or of what style in describing, does this so intense pictorial power depend? (57)

It should not surprise us, given Carlyle's emphasis on biography and Great Men, that these facts require the *proper* reading, the right kind of mind, in order to make their "factness" apparent to all. In Paterian terms, it does no good to insist upon seeing the fact "as in itself it really is" until one has determined exactly "[w]hat effect does it really produce on me?" (R xx). Ultimately, the burden of the fact is placed on the reader, on the interpretation, and those who, by an act of sheer will, insist (successfully) upon the shortest distance between fact and interpretation--as, say, the Puritans do--are the Great Men of history. The farthest thing from a passive enterprise, reading is thus an act, a demand, a weeding through the brambles of Untruth. And as is always the case in Carlyle, "Narrative is *linear*, Action is *solid*" (Essays, II: 89). Fiction, in other words, is condemned to emerge chronologically, while in History events enjoy a simultaneity without regard to chronological position.

Similarly, biographical reading is act that exercises itself among the past acts of others. And if this activity

is radically subjective, in its requirement of the active participation of the reader, the act of biographical reading demands a certain rigor in Carlyle. When he claims, for instance, that it is possible to engage the biographical subject and "decipher the whole heart of his mystery," he describes the act of constructing or *writing* biography. Although "reading," say, Carlyle's Life of Schiller permits us a superficial kind of glimpse into the acts that comprise Schiller's life, "writing" or "creating" the biography--locating, reading, situating, and arranging the textual fragments of the life--is the ultimate kind of "reading" in Carlyle. His Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches is thus an attempt to represent the "pure stuff," the texts in their raw form that the biographer melts down, assimilates, and streamlines for the biography. Cromwell, in other words, is Carlyle's attempt to reproduce the act of reading the life of Oliver Cromwell.

Because of this ever-present preoccupation with the biographies of Great Men, and because of his insistence on showing the will behind his words, Carlyle has left behind much fodder for interpretation and misreading. It is indeed tempting to serve up the more inflammatory passages of Carlyle and thus let Carlyle's outrageousness begin the reading before the reader has. When Carlyle claims, for instance, that the acts of Great Men or Heroes are responses

to hearing the voice of God, it may seem almost mandatory to talk in terms of Carlyle's "proto-fascism."

There are, however, several problems with making these kinds of historical judgments. It would not be a concession to an irresponsible relativism, for example, to point out that implying such a direct cause-effect relationship between Carlyle and today ignores not only the profound cultural developments and mutations of the twentieth-century, but necessarily depends on a patently ahistorical reading. Leading from this consideration is a less obvious problem: which is, these judgments grant Carlyle perhaps a bit too much power of influence. Even if it is possible (a problematic "if" indeed) to trace the textual lineage between Carlyle and twentieth century fascism, the resulting conclusion would imply that Carlyle himself effaced the lineage, the chronology and, in an posthumous act of will, saw his project to its inevitable end. In other words, it would take a uniquely Carlylian--by which, for the right kind of person, it is possible to efface chronological history--to make these judgments. This reading necessitates that Carlyle become the epitome of his own Great Man.

It is, however, quite useful and necessary for us to examine how and what Carlyle invests in these mystified entities. When Carlyle, for instance, claims repeatedly that Biography is dictated from God, that "[t]here is no Biography of a man, much less any History, or Biography of a

Nation, but wraps in it a message out of Heaven, addressed to the hearing ear or to the not hearing," we may want to ask the obvious question in this age of demystification: what constitutes this voice? (Latter-Day Pamphlets 273). Regardless of whether or not there can be an answer to that question, it becomes apparent that this "voice"--even if its mystical power cannot be located--is invested with considerable power in Carlyle's works. Despite, or because of, the increasing assaults on the authority of religious structures in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, Carlyle manages to convert this authority into a form that is less suspect because it does not seem to contain the trappings of established religion, all the while maintaining with increasing vigor that the "God stuff" existed. At the time when Carlyle is writing, it is just becoming possible to use the Voice From Heaven at once to refute and to reify existing religious and political structures.

Biographical history, then, would seem to have nothing at all to do with contextual reading of history. The Great Man is nothing if he cannot transcend the confines of his context:

> He was the 'creature of the Time,' they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything, he nothing--but what we the little critic could have done too! The Time call forth? Alas, we have known Times *call* loudly enough for their great man; but not find him when they called! (Heroes 14)

Although he seems to be aware that *who* these Great Men are depends on who chooses them--he does, after all, lobby for his heroes (Frederick the Great, Cromwell, Goethe, Johnson *and* Boswell) with the same vigor as he problematizes more obvious ones, such as Napoleon--Carlyle does not allow that any other considerations besides an entirely self-evident genius could have anything to do with the Great Men that emerge from any historical period. We may be relatively sure that he speaks of his own "Times"' dearth of heroes in this passage. As Daniel Cottom points out, for example, Carlyle follows the "middle-class strategy of representing prescriptive as descriptive statements, ideology as nature, and historical change as unprecedented crisis" (49). If Nature, or the Voice From Heaven, chooses its heroes, they would become as obvious to the right kinds of people as they are free from the specter of ideology.

The Genius's interface with the recurring "unprecedented crises" of history is perhaps the rhetorical trope that Carlyle most often presses into service, and a particularly inspired and sustained piece of oratory is his attempt to define the Genius in Past and Present, of which the passage below is only an excerpt:

> Genius, Poet: do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heart, to see the Truth, and speak it, and do it; Nature's own sacred voice heard once more athwart the dreary boundless element of hearsaying and canting, of twaddle and poltroonery, in which the bewildered Earth, nigh perishing, has *lost its way*. (89)

The Genius, then, *corrects* history. By reminding us from time to time of the solidity beneath, the Genius represents the underpinnings of truth beneath the stormlike flux above. For Michelet, this "solidity" is ever in the past, as history becomes increasingly obsessed with Great Men who are militaristic and have no mind for the People. For Burckhardt, such a thing as the Genius-as-corrector-of-history does not exist. His Great Man is an extremely powerful and active cultural phenomenon, in whom history becomes "consolidated," but he by no means represents a corrective voice.[1] Carlyle's Genius is thus the embodiment of a power over history that increasingly slips from the control of both Michelet and Burckhardt.

Of the writers we are concerned with here, perhaps Pater comes closest to Carlyle's conception of the Genius. Indeed, to a certain extent, much of what Carlyle screams at the top of his lungs, Pater whispers. If Carlyle's Genius is "[t]he most precious gift that Heaven can give to the Earth . . . the Soul of a Man actually sent down from the skies with a God's-message to us" or is "the perpetual Priest of Men; ordained to the office by God himself," the power of Pater's Man of Genius is just as perplexingly transcendental (Heroes 49; Latter-Day 268).

In some cases, Pater can sound very much like Carlyle as in this transcription of Marcus Aurelius' thought in Marius the Epicurean:

> 'What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are safe: One thing is needful--to live close to the divine genius within thee, and minister thereto worthily'." (193)

Speaking the words of Aurelius, Pater amplifies Carlyle's subjectivism and transforms "the one thing needful" into a genius that hints at being universal--"genius *within thee*"--rather than making him one of the chosen few. On the other hand, Marcus Aurelius is the epitome of the Paterian Genius and Great Man, and these words may just as well be addressed to himself.

As in Carlyle's conception, the Paterian Genius is intimately involved with the business of biography, of others as well as his own: researching and constructing the self, constantly refining the "genius within." Biography, for Pater, is the "true business of the historic student," and the seriousness with which he approaches this undertaking is evident in this passage from "Prosper Mérimée":

> . . . [Prosper Mérimée] had something of genius for the exact study of history, for the pursuit of exact truth, with a keenness of scent as if that alone existed, in some special area of historic fact, to be determined by his own peculiar mental preferences. Power here too again,--the crude power of men and women which mocks, while it makes use of, average human nature: it was the magic function of history to put one in living contact with that. To weigh the purely physiognomic import of the memoir, of the pamphlet saved by chance, the letter, the anecdote, the very gossip by which one came face to face with energetic personalities. (MS 16-7)

The preoccupation with facts, the coming "face to face" with past figures, the mocking of "average human nature" are all hallmarks of the Carlylian biographer. In Pater's hands especially, the Scholar becomes Great Man, the reader who can apprehend intuitively the "physiognomy" of history.[2] Pater also realizes that such reading is an act of power, the ability to come in "living contact" with history, the power to subvert chronology, and to make all discourse subject to the scholar's "own peculiar preferences." It is this figure of the reading self in history, the self that occupies anachronistically every representation of history, and thus biography, that draws him closest to Carlyle.

Subjective Historicism

In her Carlyle and the Art of History (1939), Louise Young describes what she calls Carlyle's "extreme subjectivism." She writes of that

> state of 'semi-conscious automatism' in which he wrote his histories; the sense of dual consciousness which overpowered him when he had read himself into his subject matter deeply enough to become possessed by it. It was part of his esthetic theory that the artist must attain a state of complete surrender to his conception before he can render it in terms vivid enough to reach the 'living minds' of other. (144)

Here and elsewhere in Young's discussions of Carlyle's subjectivism, there is a certain defensiveness, as if her readers would think such claims ridiculous. Indeed, one of the classic misreadings of Carlyle has been to appropriate his notion of "facts" and "objective reality" as facts

themselves, instead of the complicated, and often contradictory, rhetorical fabrics that they are. What enables this misreading is the figure of Carlyle's own Great Man, the figure whose very presence supposedly validates and objectifies all that he utters--the author as supreme authority. That Carlyle puts so much emphasis on "positions," however,--of intellect, of nationality, of self, of history--clearly makes such a reductive and unqualified "objective subjectivity" impossible in his writings. If, for example, biography is heaven-sent dictation, that communication must still be textualized; it still takes the Genius to record and interpret it. This textualization, or meditation, puts this "pure" vision at a further remove, and the figure that emerges from this enterprise is that of the writer and interpreter of history.

Thus, Carlyle never pretends to invisibility. Like Michelet, he is present in his own history, reacting in the same present tense to events long past. His "Bastille," for example, may well have served as a model for Michelet's:

> On, then, all Frenchmen, that have hearts in your bodies! Roar with all your throats, of cartilage and metal, ye Sons of Liberty; stir spasmodically whatsoever of utmost faculty is in you, soul, body, or spirit; for it is the hour! (I: 199)

A crucial element in constructing history, for Carlyle, is for him to occupy his own representation. In this case, he participates, as does Michelet, with full knowledge of the effort's eventual futility, at the same time as he plays the

part of one who does not have this knowledge. Indeed, the exuberance of this chapter is contrasted with the figure of the historian re-entering later as sober judge rather than participant: "Why dwell on what follows?" (205).[3] He even interrupts the storming of the Bastille itself, both to re-establish his position as the episode's creator and to remind us that his authority is constituted, in large measure, by his ability to adopt several positions:

> To describe the Siege of the Bastille (thought to be one of the most important in History) perhaps transcends the talent of mortals. Could one but, after infinite reading, get to understand so much as the plan of the building! (200)

From here, Carlyle plunges back into the thick of present-tense explanation, almost as if he were attempting to create the historical "simultaneity" that he speaks of in "On History," and which he claims is impossible when history becomes narrativized. Later, with an almost Burckhardtian distance on those events--a distance that Michelet would never want to achieve--Carlyle says, in "The Present Time" (1850), "I do not suppose any reader of mine, or many persons in England at all, have much faith in Fraternity, Equality and the Revolutionary Milleniums preached by the French Prophets in this age" (Latter-Day 46).

Thus, facts become intangible currency, completely transformed from subject to subject, from position to position. The corollary to this view of the "facts" is that there is no one privileged position in Carlyle. From Sartor

Resartus, we learn that a non-subjective historical authority is not only elusive, but that in our attempts to insist on it, we run headlong into the absurdity of our own maneuvers. Carlyle, for example, liked to refer to the story of Sir Walter Raleigh who, after viewing from his prison cell a disturbance on the street, heard three completely different eyewitness accounts of this event, all of which differed from his own.[4] From this, Carlyle concludes that there are no facts which do not exist apart from the reading:

> Consider how it is that historical documents and records originate; even honest records, where the reporters were unbiased by personal regard; a case which, were nothing more wanted, must ever be among the rarest. (Essays, II: 87)

This conception would seem to be the opposite of a Kantian notion of disinterest, where forms and structures do not trigger this "personal regard." In this respect, Pater is more closely aligned with Carlyle's notion of subjective facts. Indeed, disinterest for Pater finally depends on subjective judgment. This does not mean, however, that these subjective considerations necessarily result in a historical relativism: such an argument would depend on and privilege notions of objective scholarship that both Carlyle and Pater, as well as Burckhardt and Michelet, argue persuasively against.

Hedva Ben-Israel says, for example, that Carlyle's French Revolution applied the "romantic poets' theory of

artistic creation" and that this application implied a correlative "rejection of thought about the event and also of historical perspective. Distance produced the generalizations which Carlyle did not want" (130). Such a reading gives us a radically disinterested Carlyle, free from all of the many positions that he doffs and then discards with equal nonchalance. This reading, aside from claiming that Romantic poetry is also without "thought," also situates "distance" and "relativism" as oppositions at the same time that the reading necessitates that they are one and the same.

Ben-Israel's conflation of Wordsworthian and Carlylian subjectivism is particularly useful because it is also a model for the same kinds of misreadings of Paterian subjectivism.[5] These readings assume that once the scholar or poet announces himself as a presence in his own discourse, that he is somehow free from the rigors of responsible scholarship; since a complete self-knowledge is assumed, all writing becomes "automatic"--dictation from the God that the self has become. Although Carlyle would embrace this mystified style of writing, and his prolificacy testifies to the effectiveness of this mode of production, he never assumed that what he "recorded" was merely the endless monologue of his own mind. Pater, similarly, labored over his manuscripts--indeed, only published four volumes in his lifetime--and despite his oft-repeated

contentions that the act of reading engages the self, the Wordsworthian "I" is nowhere to be found in Pater. The term used for so many years to describe Pater's writings, "impressionistic criticism," like any label, masks the complexities and refinements in Pater's work. Such terms have allowed scholars to assume a Paterian criticism that is dedicated solely to subjective reactions to various texts.

Historicism and Resurrection

On March 6, 1835, Carlyle learned that John Stuart Mill had accidently let the only copy of the first volume of Carlyle's French Revolution be destroyed in the fireplace. Carlyle's concern seems to have been chiefly directed to how the accident upset Mill, despite the fact that five hard-won months of work had been irretrievably destroyed. After saying to his wife that "we must endeavour to hide from [Mill] how very serious this business is to us," Carlyle went to bed, and then wrote the next day in his journal,

> I dreamt of my father and sister Margaret alive; yet all defaced with the sleepy stagnancy, swollen hebetude of the grave, and again dying in some strange rude country; a horrid dream, the painfullest too is when you wake first. (quoted in Froude, London, I: 29)

His practice having been to destroy his notes as he finished with them, the act of rethinking, restructuring, and rewriting the manuscript was, as we might imagine, an almost insurmountable one for Carlyle, especially since it entailed a reversal of his own chronology of production. Carlyle's

constant emphasis on the urgency of production is well-known:

> 'Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day, for the Night cometh wherein no man can work'. (Sartor Resartus 149)

This drive, along with the fact that his destruction of notes betrays a need to signify forward progress, meant that a five-month regression in his work literally required a resurrection of the dead.

Since it is one of the contentions of this study that nineteenth-century historicism includes an appropriation of models of resurrection or exhumation, this episode from the life of Carlyle is particularly noteworthy. Nor is it an isolated example. To Emerson, he writes of "[m]y thrice unfortunate Book on Cromwell,--it is a real descent to Hades, to Golgotha and Chaos! I feel oftenest as if it were possible to die one's self than to bring it to life" (II: 57). Although writing is an "act" for Carlyle, he often expresses the anxiety at its remove from the heroism and simultaneity of the events, and we often see him describing how difficult the task is of reconstructing events or, more crucially, understanding them after they have been reconstructed.

In the same journal entry, in trying to summon what was needed to begin the manuscript anew, Carlyle pinpoints where the anxiety for such a project lies:

> Oh, that I had faith! Oh, that I had! Then were there nothing too hard or heavy for me. Cry silently to thy utmost heart to God for it. Surely He will give it thee. At all events, it is as if my invisible schoolmaster had torn my copybook when I showed it, and said 'No, boy! Thou must write it better'. (29-30)

The faith that Carlyle fears the absence of--the faith that life may be produced from the wreckage of death--is the same sort of faith that Burckhardt disavows from the outset, Michelet obstinately embraces, and Pater subtly questions. And as the image of the phoenix once again asserts itself into this study, it becomes important to mark the limits of this "faith" in Carlyle, to discover the extent to which this faith depends on some transcendent. It is crucial, in other words, to examine how Carlyle manages to bridge the vast space, that he describes in this episode and elsewhere, between will to produce and actual production.

History, for Carlyle as well as for Pater, is palimpsestic. It is a "complex Manuscript, covered over with formless inextricably-entangled unknown characters . . . and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there,--*some letters, some words, may be deciphered*" (Essays, II: 89; emphasis added). For Pater, the words that once constructed the palimpsest have long since been covered by many generations of new words that "clothe" the frame, to

use Carlyle's model. In this way, whatever "reading" we do of past generations is a process that is mediated entirely by the gulfs of history and culture.

Carlyle, however, implies in his quote that the only mediation or, in this case, hindrance in historical reading is the almost physical deterioration of the original text. It is, in other words, still possible for historical reading to be immediate, but we are missing much of the evidence that cultural processes have devoured in their movement through Time. Thus, the barrier is not in the method of reading--which also serves, remember, as the *amanuensis* of gods--but in those who do the reading, many of whom, says Carlyle, have fallen into many pitfalls of cultural "progress."

The limits of the faith that the immediacy of history is always, in some form or other, there for the reading may be found in the "organic" palimpsest described in the "Anti-Dryasdust" section of Oliver Cromwell:

> Under the green foliage and blossoming fruit-trees of Today, there lie, rotting slower or faster, the forests of all other Years and Days. . . . You will find them in all stages of decay and preservation; down deep to the beginnings of the History of Man. (6)

It may surprise us that Carlyle does not use this model of the palimpsest to illustrate the possibilities of "face to face" historical inquiry, but to conclude that "[a]t bottom, there is no perfect History; there is none such conceivable." In fact, historical inquiry and

"preservation" are in one of Carlyle's states of "unprecedented crisis." In this model, the writing of history becomes a matter of recovery and preservation, and calls for a more expanded "faith" at the same time that it decries the circumstances that cause such faith to be threatened. While Carlyle's notion that "there is no perfect History" may seem to problematize the prospects of immediacy, he makes these claims under the auspices of restoring the importance of the seventeenth century, that century which seems to Carlyle to be most in trouble of disappearing from our history.

All historical writing, then, is quite literally a leap of faith. For Carlyle, this faith demands an "act," a destruction of all the means that prop up historical reading, such as dependence on past readings or methodologies, cant, or lies. It has yet to be argued whether or not this "anti-method" methodology causes Carlyle to become dependent upon this act of destruction or faith. Sartor Resartus, however, makes obvious the already apparent political dimensions of this act of faith, where destruction becomes the last, and only, resort:

> This is Teufelsdröckh content that old Society should be deliberately burnt (alas! with quite other fuel than spicewood); in the faith that she is a Phoenix; and that a new heavenborn young one will rise out of her ashes! We ourselves, restricted to the duty of Indicator, shall forbear commentary. (180)

Inevitably, then, there is a sum total to this "division" of personalities. What it amounts to, as we have seen, is Pater's faith in the individual as an entity autonomous from history. If he is skeptical, in a Burckhardtian sense, of historical theories that provide for the possibility of super-historical acts, he defies this skepticism and allows such acts in his individuals (his Marcus Aurelius, for instance), almost as if history were an object, a prison, from which no one, save the individual genius, could break free. Thus, Pater's faith in the individual's ability to emerge from the historical contingencies that imprison him can be contrasted to Michelet's faith in The People's ability to reverse history, to resurrect the Revolution. Whereas congregations of People in Pater tend to be, when not violent mobs, then certainly ominous and threatening, his individual is scholarly, benevolent, disinterested, and male. Conversely, Michelet's individuals, or "ambitious marionettes," are the ones to be distrusted, and his conception of The People includes both lower and middle classes, both men and women.[11]

Pater also differs from Michelet in his alternating skepticism toward and attraction to a "Golden Age" notion of history. Whereas Michelet maintains a posture of certainty toward the Revolution, Pater both praises and criticizes historical uses of Ancient Greece. This is not say, as we

The commentary that the "Indicator" forbears at this point is taken up in Carlyle's later works, where this faith becomes tempered by his research into the French Revolution. In France's case, this destruction has produced no apparent Phoenix:

> . . . poor France, nearly all ground down suicidally likewise into rubbish and Chaos, will be glad to rally; to begin growing, and new-shaping her inorganic dust; very slowly, through centuries, through Napoleons, Louis-Philippes, and other the like media and phases,--into new, infinitely preferable France, we can hope!--. (French Revolution, II: 177)

There is, of course, less at stake in Carlyle's "hoping" for this unlikely Phoenix than there is for Michelet. Carlyle's amazement over the Revolution, however, stems not from the fact that such devastation is horrifying, but that there remains a certain pathetic obstinance to this enterprise, despite the fact that such destruction is seemingly unproductive and "suicidal." In the face of this impotence, these "acts of faith" become heroic, admirable for their own sake--to use Pater's words--acts wherein will *becomes* production: Cromwell remains stubbornly fixed on his vision of Puritanism, all the while offending every cultural structure around him; Samuel Johnson becomes "Hercules with the burning Nessus'-shirt" because he remains steadfast in the face of "physical and spirit pain" (Heroes 205); even the Pope takes on an ironically heroic stature for Carlyle:

> In a Time otherwise too prone to forget, he keeps up the mournfulest ghastly memorial of the Highest, Blessedest, which once was; which, in new

> fit forms, will again partly have to be. Is he not as a perpetual death's-head and cross-bones, with their *Resurgam*, on the grave of a Universal Heroism,--grave of a Christianity? (Past and Present 144)

In Carlylian terms, then, Pater's Duke Carl of Rosenmold, upon whose grave also appears the word *Resurgam*, is also a heroic figure. Is not anachronism the ultimate historical act of faith? The Duke's determination to destroy his own ties with his culture by restoring a previous one is a patently Teufelsdröckhian maneuver. Similarly, Carlyle's heroes are not monolithically, or traditionally, heroic; even in his own representation of them, his heroes always appear a bit ridiculous at times.

We may also detect a similar ambivalence in Pater's treatment of Duke Carl. Certainly the Duke's increasingly desperate attempts to write his own death in culture, epitomized by the staging of his own funeral, are absurd. Nonetheless, it is in the Duke's eventual death that he is victorious, "in freedom and effective, at last" (IP 153). And if Pater's rhetorical maneuvers in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" expose the possibilities of historical displacement, the figure of the "heroic" Duke Carl situated firmly amidst his failures counteracts these possibilities.

Complete Historicism and the Act of Historical Representation

Peter Allan Dale says that "[o]nly in Pater does one find the adoption of a complete historicism," which Dale

defines as "a very significant shift from history as a variety of knowledge to history as complete knowledge" (8). One could object that Carlyle, one of the subjects of Dale's study, is also a complete historicist. This could not, however, be an entirely convincing argument. Instead, Carlyle manages to occupy much of the territory between these complete and "incomplete" historicisms. Though not absolute, history for Carlyle is a discourse that, in its varying forms, overwhelms him completely. If, for Barthes, Michelet is a historian who attempts to "devour" the constant stream of history, Carlyle describes a history within which one is often powerless to act and thus is devoured. This "devouring" often appears most strikingly at the times when Carlyle attempts to control it.

No matter how much effort Carlyle himself expended in trying to nail down his own terms--"history," "religion," and "belief"--they cannot, in Carlyle, be neatly cordoned off into separate areas. What is left, then, is a historical discourse in which the very "slipperiness" of these terms is at issue. Like Pater, who problematizes then admires Pico Della Mirandola's worldview, Carlyle's attempts to bolster collective Belief, including his own, in the expanding face of Unbelief, to tack down the edges of a discourse that threatens to engulf him, shows the desire for, and yet the doubt of, univocity. Even these most powerful of Carlyle's terms shift, trading significance and

place in the hierarchy, the mark of fluid movement within a monolithic model.

James Anthony Froude, Carlyle's friend and biographer, called Carlyle "a Calvinist without the theology" (Forty Years, II: 2). Indeed, as Calvinist theology implies a helplessness in Time, so does history for Carlyle:

> [History] is a looking both before and after; as, indeed, the coming Time already waits, unseen, yet definitely shaped, predetermined and inevitable, in the Time to come; and only by the combination of both is the meaning of either ever completed. (Essays, II: 83)

To the extent that Carlyle's history is itself a theology, this is indeed a "complete" historicism. It provides for its own future "completion" while refusing any appeal outside the system it creates. However, if this model of history is disturbingly closed off, definite, and perhaps even ahistorical, then it should be marked against the other kinds of Carlylian history that challenge this one.

When I said earlier that it would be difficult to call Carlyle a "complete historicist," I had in mind Carlyle's dependence on a God-like, transcendent element. For all his claims to the completeness of history, there remains an agency in Carlyle beyond this "completeness." To a certain extent, one could not go too wrong in sticking to this argument. At the same time, such an argument would have to take into account the fact that, in the same essay, history seems to subsume even this spiritual element:

> For, strictly considered, what is all Knowledge too but recorded Experience, and a product of History; of which, therefore, Reasoning and *Belief*, no less than Action and Passion, are essential elements. (84; emphasis added)

If "Belief" is "a product of History," then what produces History? Why, the spiritual, of course: "History, as it lies at the root of all science, is also the first distinct product of man's spiritual nature; his earliest expression of what can be called Thought" (83). This apparent contradiction is not so easily solved by claims that "spiritual nature" and "Belief" should not be conflated, that the spiritual produces Belief as well as History. In this construction, the "spiritual" would be required to create its own support structures. The spiritual's necessity for these structures, for it to be represented by Belief, would problematize its claims to transcendence.

If history subsumes both religion and philosophy, is Carlyle's not finally a complete historicism? That is, despite his aphoristic and hyperbolic claims for history occasioned by an essay for Fraser's, is history "the end" for Carlyle? A "definitive" answer is perhaps as elusive as it is erroneous to account for this problem with a dichotomy between "worldly" and "other-worldly" realms. At the same time that belief is historically contingent--"No man believes, or can believe, exactly what his grandfather believed: he enlarges somewhat, by fresh discovery, his view of the Universe, and consequently his Theorem of the

Universe" (Heroes 135)--we can "if needful, discern without difficulty that He [God] has always been!" (Past and Present 247). What Carlyle refers to as the Soul is also historically transcendent:

> A SOUL is not like the wind (*spiritus*, or breath) contained within a capsule; the ALMIGHTY MAKER is not like a Clockmaker that once, in old immemorial ages, having *made* his Horloge of the Universe, sits ever since and sees it go! Not at all. Hence comes Atheism; come, as we say, many other *isms*; and as the sum of all, comes Valetism, the *reverse* of Heroism; sad root of all woes whatsoever. (153)

In such a paradigm, history becomes merely a "deciphering . . . of that mystic heaven-written Sanscrit," and "serene or complete Religion" becomes "the highest aspect of human nature" (Essays, III: 251; Past and Present 63).

What is thus a discursive simultaneity in Pater and Carlyle--or, in other words, discourses that conflict, overlap, and subsume--recalls the question of reconciliation. It is impossible, as we discussed in Chapter Two, to discuss Carlyle and Pater strictly in terms of the traditional, and idealized, mode of reconciliation, where two discourse merge perfectly. The need for such a merging is not only based on the kind of binaristic reasoning that the work of Pater and Carlyle frustrate, but precludes what is produced by paradox reconciliations and rejects out of hand what can be gained from examining Carlyle's forced reconciliations. Carlyle, for instance, uses this example of the value of biography:

> Truly it is no easy matter to get across the chasm of Seven Centuries, filled with such material. But here, of all helps, is not a Boswell the welcomest; even a small Boswell? Veracity, true simplicity of heart, how valuable are these always. (Past and Present 51)

What masquerade as "truth" and "simplicity" here exercise considerable historical force. Anachronism, as well as seven-hundred years of cultural processes, are reconciled by one man, a Boswell. If we are bent on the traditional, one-to-one, reconciliation, as Carlyle himself sometimes seems to be, then we prevent questions that develop from asking why so much power is invested in one person. Indeed, total reconciliation in this example is itself a forced reconciliation.

What definitely cannot be reconciled in Carlyle is historical representation, which is always inevitably anachronistic. Despite his best efforts, the historian is confined to a chronology that the thick and concurrent "actions" of history resist at every point:

> The most gifted man can observe, still more can record, only the *series* of his own impressions: his observation, therefore, to say nothing of its other imperfections, must be *successive*, while the things done were often *simultaneous*; the things done were not a series, but a group. (Essays, II: 88)

Given this fallible human agency, restricted not only in representation but in reading, history remains largely unrecoverable, and Carlyle constantly gives us testimonials to how much is, or will be, lost from past centuries. Since lost causes, as well as the recovery of lost greatness, are

a heroic acts, however, the historian can with Teufelsdröckhian persistence provide a wary glimpse of centuries past, "by means of certain confused Papers, printed and other . . . and to look face to face on [a somewhat remote Century]." And if this, once again, forces the poly- into mono-chronology, then such a model only imitates the progress of the centuries, that are, after all, "all lineal children of one another" (Past and Present 41).

Thus the act is always the deciding factor in Carlyle: it makes and suspends its own rules, it decides its own chronology, it reconciles what is "needful," it polices its own autonomy. If the act of historical writing conflicts with what has been defined in the abstract, then the definition itself was an act, exercised within the confines of its own rules. Whereas Coleridge argues absolutes in the age of relativism, or Pico Della Mirandola's method cannot be reconciled with the rules of Hegelian historicism, Pater also returns to the act of reading, within whose bounds all "acts" are self-justified. His "And yet . . . " signals that the rules that he has so meticulously and eloquently described are off, are at least relegated to an attenuating position behind the power of reading, a reading that defines itself every time it acts. That these rules, these *accoutrements*, change with each act testifies to the fluidity of a history that changes its "dress" as it moves imperceptibly through the ages.

History and the Triumph of the Signifier

Like many of Carlyle's ideas, his "Clothes Philosophy," comes from Germany:

> It is a common theory among the Germans, that every Creed, every Form of worship, is a *form* merely; the mortal and ever-changing *spirit* of Religion is, with more or less completeness, expressed to the material eye, and made manifest and influential among the doings of men. (Essays, I: 143)

Even in this pre-Sartor essay (1828), we can see the familiar oppositions in other "clothes," if you will. We may also detect in this early construction an apparent de-emphasis of mere "form." Such a position not only allows Carlyle to reject Christianity at the same time that he embraces a kind of Calvinism, but accounts for much of what seems like contradiction in Carlyle. Nearly of all of Carlyle's thought, in other words, is based on a wholesale investment into this system where form and spirit, man and God, clothes and body, signifier and signified are bifurcated, and where the only connection is the former's necessarily flawed representation of the latter. In establishing and constantly re-establishing this connection, however, Carlyle evidences a more crucial role for mere "clothing." Although he attempts to show how reprehensible form without spirit is, the signifiers, the clothes, become much more important than what they ostensibly represent.

Almost from the very beginning that the study of "Clothes" announces itself, Carlyle expands the role of the

signifier. Clothes, for example, are manifestly political: " . . . from the King's-mantle downwards, [clothes] are Emblematic, not of want only, but of a manifold cunning Victory over Want." Since even in the most literal sense clothes operate at the level of representation, can that level not be expanded?

> On the other hand, all Emblematic things are properly Clothes, thought-woven or hand-woven: must not the Imagination weave Garments, visible Bodies, wherein the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason are, like Spirits, revealed, and the first become all-powerful. (Sartor 56)

Thus cut free from the strictly physical definition, all creation thus becomes modes of clothing, and even those thoughts which seem to have come *ex nihilo* have the same basic function, and are produced from the same source. Even our language "'is called the Garment of Thought: however, it should rather be, Language is the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought'" (57). This apparent promotion to "flesh," however, does not remove language from its function as clothing, its role as signifier.

Literally everything that defines us and that we use to define others is always already present. Although we can see past it, we cannot exist "beyond" clothes:

> 'But the deepest of all illusory Appearances, for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial ME for dwelling here, and yet to blind it . . . In vain, while here on Earth, shall you endeavor to strip them off; you can, at best,

> but rend them asunder for moments and look through'. (197)

Like the fabric that may be momentarily "rent asunder," only through this radically non-material kind of destruction can we even glimpse what is not defined by clothes. This realm, however, cannot even be described, since such an act would require us to represent it, to clothe it. Even the demand that it be described testifies to how "burdened" we are in this world of clothes.

For Carlyle, there is only one creature to be completely hated in this construction: the one for whom the material world is all that exists, whom Carlyle sees in the allegorized figure of the Dandy, the opposite of the Hero, and for whom he reserves his worst venom:

> Heroic Vacuum; inexpugnable, while purse and present condition of society hold out; curable by no hellebore. The doom of Fate was, Be thou a Dandy! Have thy eye-glasses, opera-glasses, thy Long-Acre cab with white-breeched tiger, thy yawning impassivities, pococurantisms; *fix* thyself in Dandyhood, undeliverable; it is thy doom. (Past and Present 132)

Although his anger is less monolithic for the Poet of Cloth in the "Dandiacal Body" section of Sartor, the Dandy is yet another incarnation of the figure that frequently appears in Carlyle: the announced non-believer who unheroically buckles under to Unbelief, the skeptic whose own weakness dooms him to the defectiveness of this world.

It is not too difficult to see why this figure is such a threat to Carlyle: his entire method depends on the

existence of this representative, and would, indeed, have to invent him if he did not exist. Within a model set up in terms of a clear break between signified and signifier, between God and human, there exists an inevitable anxiety of representation. What is, by definition, impossible to represent materially in the signified is matched by an inversely proportional visibility in the signifier. Hence, the figure that is completely defined by the signifier: the Dandy. If nothing else, Carlyle has a healthy fear of material power and of the threat of its sway over both him and the rest of the world. Even Teufelsdröckh's powerful intellect, for example, may be threatened by the pure materiality of the Dandy:

> We have often blamed him for a habit of wire-drawing and over-refining; from of old we have been familiar with his tendency to Mysticism and Religiosity, whereby in every thing he was still scenting out Religion: but never perhaps did these amaurosis suffusions so cloud and distort his otherwise most piercing vision, as in this of the *Dandiacal Body!* (Sartor 217)

As with the figure of Michelet before *La Gioconda*, there exists both the threat of seduction and the threat that this seduction will lure Carlyle away from his obstinate hold on the concept of the signified. The Dandy thus represents the last step that can too easily be taken: If our entire world is constructed by clothes, signifiers, the only way that the signified can exist is through a faith that cannot be justified materially. Since Carlyle's thought is based on a demonstration of this faith through

the act of historical writing, materiality exists as a constant threat. That is, it is too easy to clip--as Carlyle's Dandy has done--that last invisible thread between an overwhelmingly evident material world and an inaccessible spiritual one.

It is perhaps this issue of the "triumph" of the signifier that troubles any comparison of Pater and Carlyle. While Carlyle, in loud, unequivocal terms, calls for a determined faith in absolutes, even as he allows that these absolutes must be represented in historically relative terms, Pater ostensibly argues against the "sickly thought" of absolute discourse, and prefers instead a relative historicism, allowing of course that other ontological constructions can be "curiosities" and are therefore worthy of study. And it is the concept of this "curiosity" that threatens Pater's complete relativism. At the same time that the Paterian method is to proceed "appreciatively" or "essayistically," to choose one's subjects and "style" in terms of subjective interest, to ground one's response to these texts in the senses, his careful historical relativism, as we have seen, tends to "collapse" into a transcendent aesthetic. Pater's thought, then, progresses from signifier to signified.

Carlyle's, it may be said, proceeds from signified to signifier. For all his attempts to locate the source of these powerful political and intellectual forces in a non-

material realm, his works testify to a signifying power that exists separately from it, with only that transcendent connection of faith to bridge the two. In this way, he and Pater arrive--if not at the same destination--then to ends not too far distant. There may even be more commerce between the two when we consider that historical writing as an "act of faith" is a conception that depends on the subject, that this Carlylian "connection" between the signified and the signifier does not itself transcend the inter-personal level.

James Froude says that, for Carlyle, "[e]xperienced fact was to him revelation, and the only true revelation" (Forty, II: 2). Pater's Marcus Aurelius, as we recall, says that "What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it." It is the enclosure of this circle (metaphorical in Pater, implied in Carlyle), and the paradoxical possibility of the revelation that extends beyond it, that makes this oscillation between the signifier and the signified so compelling in both writers. In the figure of Teufelsdröckh piecing together a universal philosophy from hopelessly fragmented texts, much like the scholar whose reading extends far beyond the tapestry in "Denys L'Auxerrois," we find a historicism that, through this oscillation, extends beyond the pronouncements that the writers themselves make. And if this oscillation tends to disrupt the "laws" of history that these two writers set for

themselves, perhaps it is not history that Pater and Carlyle engage in, but what Foucault, through Nietzsche, calls "genealogy":

> Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. . . . [I]t must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places. (Reader 76)

Notes

1. In a letter to Emerson on 17 July 1846, Carlyle speaks of Michelet's "loose" definition of the "facts":

> Michelet's genial champagne *froth*,--alas, I could not find no fact in it that could stand handling; and so have broken down in the middle of *La France*, and run over to hickory and Jared for shelter! (Emerson Correspondance ii, 138)

2. Michelet also uses language quite similar to this when he speaks of his role as the historian of sixteenth century France: "I believe that I have seen this century in the face, and I have tried to show what I have seen. I have given to all, at least, a true impression of its physiognomy" (Histoire de France, VII: 456-6).

3. It is this textual "transformation" from the exhortating partisan to the ironic historian that separates Michelet's endorsement of The People from Carlyle's attempt to represent them.

4. This anecdote is also a favorite of the New Historicists.

5. Although they were acquainted, Carlyle, in fact, was repelled by Wordsworth and his work:

> Of me in my first times he had little knowledge; and any feeling he had towards me, I suspect, was largely blended with abhorrence and perhaps a kind of fear. His works I knew, but never considerably reverenced; could not, on attempting it. (Reminiscences 331)

CHAPTER FIVE

WALTER PATER AND THE DISINTERESTED SUBJECT

> . . . the whole opposition between the subjective and the objective . . . is altogether irrelevant in aesthetics, since the subject, the willing individual that furthers his own egoistic ends, can be conceived of only as the antagonist, not as the origin of art.
>
> Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy

> And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind.
>
> Pater, The Renaissance

> It is one of those subjective and partial ideals, based on vivid, because limited, apprehension of the truth of one aspect of experience (in this case, of the beauty of the world and the brevity of man's life there) which it may be said to be the special vocation of the young to express.
>
> Pater, Marius the Epicurean

I

Under the auspices of instructions on how to read Plato, Pater lists the elements of what he calls the critic's "duty":

> . . . to follow intelligently, but *with strict indifference*, the mental processes there, as he might witness a game of skill; better still . . . to watch, for its dramatic interest, the spectacle of a powerful, of a sovereign intellect, translating itself, amid a complex group of conditions which can never in the nature of things

> occur again, at once pliant and resistant to them . . . . (P 11; emphasis added)

The fascination here and elsewhere with the writing subject is seemingly checked by Pater's emphasis on an "indifferent" or "detached" scholarship. In turn, this "sovereign" power is itself checked by the fact that it emerges from and resists a "complex group of conditions." Thus, the text, the subject, and the reader are all historical productions that announce themselves through their actions as resistant, or indifferent, to that history. Although we cannot change the fact that we are materially and historically contingent, we can nonetheless attempt to remain--like Duke Carl--in a state of "disinterest" to the taint of those contingencies.

Pater's reading of "disinterestedness" is, in some respects, an amalgam of Arnold's and Kant's very different uses of the term. Whereas for Arnold, disinterestedness manifests itself in a critical responsibility wherein one removes oneself from contaminating biases, Kant's notion of disinterestedness is of a "pure" aesthetic judgment that can be bracketed off from interest or *telos*. Readings that conclude at this already problematic amalgamation, however, neglect the complexities of Pater's use of the term.[1] Kant's "pure" judgment, for instance, becomes "purification" in Pater. For Pater, reading is the process of purifying the judgment rather than something that occurs after a universal "purity" is in place. Also, while he may agree with Arnold's call for a removal from interests that taint

critical judgment, Pater does not see this removal as something that can be separated from its context. Disinterest, in other words, is possible only within a lifestyle of "detachment" or austerity, of an almost cloistral, ascetic existence--an aesthetics of the ascetic, if you will. Disinterest is thus a matter of purifying the machinery that produces judgment.

In both these permutations of previous notions of "disinterestedness," Pater sees disinterest as a process constantly involved with the human subject, something that could never--nor should ever--be "objective." Historically, the subject is always implicated in discussions of disinterest and, before Pater, interested subjectivity is often the great impediment to a pure disinterest. In Pater, however, subjectivity both produces and subverts disinterest. After all, without subjective interest and the possible threat of its influence there would be no need to discuss disinterest. Those who are able, then, to harness the power of subjectivity without becoming "subjected" to its threat become, for Pater, powerful masters of human will, "kings" of disinterest. My use of "king" here is not meant to be glib; in Pater, disinterest as power is often associated with autocracy, particularly in <u>Marius the Epicurean</u>.

Because he uses it so often and in seemingly unrelated contexts, it might seem that Pater reduces the term

"disinterestedness" to a vague buzzword, a term diluted by its own frequency of use. By Pater's time, the term had entered the general currency and was used to mean anything from altruism to boredom. While Pater may participate in the popularizing of the term, his use and reconstruction of "disinterestedness" is clearly informed by Kantian and Arnoldian conceptions.[2] Pater's use of disinterest comes from a dialectic of sorts between Kant's aesthetic disinterest and Arnold's scholarly disinterest. What Pater manages to "reconcile" from these two entirely different contexts, and subsequently transform into his own creation, is the concern of this chapter.

Kantian disinterest is concerned with separation. Like his own divisions between the "pleasant," the "beautiful," and the "good," there exist equally decisive lines between the moral, the intellectual, the utilitarian and the aesthetic (Wellek 229-30). Because it is bound up in satisfaction with the object's representation, desire, something that can only refer to one person's whims or interests, does not enter this aesthetic realm. Aesthetic judgments, or judgments of taste, are also subjective, but they refer to a "subjective universality"--a problematic concept which Kant grounds in "what we can presuppose in every other person" (381). Again, Kant defines this universal subjectivity in terms of how it is separated from other modes of judgment. Aesthetic judgment does not fall

into the machinery of cognition or logic where interest holds sway. Instead, aesthetic judgment is a flash perception that is pre-cognitive and pre-logical, something whose "determining ground can be *no other than subjective*" (379).

Mapped out this way, it would seem that Kantian subjectivity is nothing more than objectivity by way of subjective unanimity. Kant assumes in each person an aesthetic apparatus not only capable of the same estimation as every one else, but one that manages to bypass cultural, historical, economical, educational, and psychological contamination. This "naive error," as Eagleton calls it, of basing a universality on the assumption that everyone is capable of cordoning off material concerns does, despite Kant's arguments, privilege a cultural specificity. While Kant may assert the possibility of a universal indifference to the existence of things, the pretense of disinterestedness is only possible when material needs, or interested satisfactions, have been met. That is, Kantian disinterest is itself dependent *on* something--a culture where material interests can be momentarily tabled.

Kant's ateleological aesthetic judgment, as Rene Wellek points out, is often conflated with the Paterian version of art-for-art's-sake, infamously stated (and infamously misread as mere aesthetic hedonism) in the Conclusion to <u>The Renaissance</u>. This conflation is no coincidence and perhaps

bears more examination than Wellek is allowed. Both Pater and Kant, in fact, attempt to separate the aesthetic from the teleological, and both locate aesthetic "truth" in a subjectivity. While Kant's separation between the aesthetic and the teleological, as we have seen, replaces an interested subjectivity with a universal one, Pater calls for a separation between aesthetic response and the fetters that bind it. The two separations part ways, of course, when Kant's universal subjectivity does not square with Pater's more experiential and diversified subjectivity.

Despite these differences in subjectivity, Pater covers much of the ground between this seemingly contradictory juxtaposition of the subjective and the universal. Unlike Kant, however, where a disinterest is already in place before judgment occurs, Pater acknowledges paradoxically that disinterest is possible only through interest. Rigorous, disinterested scholarship is born out of a voracious intellectual "curiosity"--a term, as we have seen, that Pater does not take lightly. Nor does this disinterest completely displace interest. The two are mutually dependent; once interest disappears, then disinterest merely becomes un-interest.

Pater's disinterest also differs from Kant's in that cultural specificity, for Pater, is overt. His "interests" are obvious; those whom he imbues with disinterest in his fiction and essays are nearly always scholars. The single

persona most associated with disinterest is his Marcus Aurelius, whose disinterest and ability to rule the Roman Empire are the results of his rigorous and disinterested scholarship. The subjects of Pater's essays are themselves always concerned with specific personages--and, thus, a specific cultural and historical moment--so that when Pater seems to appeal to a universality, he is doing so within the context of the essay or portrait's subject.

This emphasis on the scholar or the critic's disinterest is perhaps why Pater's disinterest seems closely aligned with Arnold's. If, as I have said, it is one of Pater's ambitions to raise the scholar to a more powerful and consequential status, then he would of course find similarities in Arnoldian disinterest, which David Bromwich describes as "the negation of interests which forms the prerequisite of the critic, whose function is to assign the proper value to every item in our cultural inventory" (66). To rise to this enviable position of "assigning value," the Arnoldian critic must divest himself of loyalties, affiliations, and so on, in order to gain the impartial credentials required of the critic. Only by purging the impurities of interest can the critic ever hope "to see the object as in itself it really is."

On the first page of his Preface to <u>The Renaissance</u>, Pater also cites this familiar phrase and pronounces that it is "justly said to be the aim of all true criticism

whatever." From Arnoldian disinterest to his "object as in itself it really is," he does not account, as Pater does, for subjective considerations; of a governing subjectivity; we have only the nebulous "law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all things it touches" (Arnold, "Function" 246). In the process of divesting overtly political interests, conflicting subjective aesthetic concerns must also be purged, not out of necessity, not as a stated goal, but as something contained in the trappings of outside influence. A subjectivity, or at least Pater's animating one, is the price the Arnoldian critic must pay in order to be trusted as society's judge on matters aesthetic.

This is not to say that inquisitiveness, which is in some measure activated by subjective desire, is not rewarded in Arnold. Arnold's "free play" that I have mentioned as indicative of a vague or non-existent subjectivity, seems to resemble Pater's notion of scholarly "curiosity":

> It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake . . . has . . . in our language . . . but a bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. ("Function" 245)

If we can accept Arnold description of a what was considered to be a "bad and disparaging" connotation of "curiosity," then we can see the extent to which Pater seeks to revise

this term. While Pater embraces this curiosity "for its own sake," Arnold is nonetheless fearful of effacing that line between subjective curiosity and practical interest. Indeed, we can read Arnold's interest/disinterest opposition in the critical arena as a homology for his own unease towards the threat of subjective interests that might bind his own judgment.

Pater, then, invokes Arnold's "aim" in the Preface, but in the same sentence he subverts that aim by reinvesting and even replacing it with an unapologetic subjectivity:

> . . . the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly . . . . What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? (xix-xx)[3]

Pater's disinterest is based in several ways on its historical situation: his "interest" in disinterest is itself a product of historical conditions in which the term comes into play; and, perhaps more crucially, his disinterest as it is presented and projected in his texts represents a historical position, "a complex group of conditions," as Pater himself says, "which can never in the nature of things occur again." Thus, when Pater speaks of knowing the "object as it really is" through the unabashed eyes of subjectivity, he is speaking of the "disinterested" critic in a specific historical moment. On the other hand,

Arnold, as David Bromwich points out, is nothing if not ahistorical: "History, after all, is what Arnold's disinterestedness has to leave out of its reckoning, and to supply a style with its genealogy or a touchstone with its context would only give the game away" (72). Although there is a certain dialectical, even historical, tension between Arnold's Hellenism and Hebraism, he undercuts that with a criticism that is non-practical, non-polemical, and non-tendentious, one that seeks to remove historical context and all the markings that would identify it as such. Pater is more interested in history as a source of knowledge and how the writing of history can be manipulated to produce new knowledge. All this is accomplished through the carefully constructed and disinterested appartus of the subject.

II

Near the last paragraph of the Conclusion to The Renaissance, just as his infamous discourse on the value of subjective experience reaches its climax, Pater confounds received notions of subjectivity: "Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, *disinterested or otherwise*, which come naturally to many of us" (190; emphasis added). By placing the word "disinterested" in the midst of exhorting his audience to pursue a life of passion and sensual experimentation, Pater wrenches the word from a strictly Arnoldian context and revises notions of what

constitutes a disinterested judgment. Making oneself disinterested is hardly a matter of purging the interested subject, but is instead a meticulous refining of that subject.

David Bromwich argues that Paterian subjectivity and disinterest meet, not at "sympathy" or what Arnold sees as "interest," but at "curiosity" which finds its manifestations in the "strangeness" of the object, something whose interest is measured by the "unfamiliarity to the self" (78). The business of the subject, then, is to seek out what will alienate it from itself, or will force it from its own self-containedness.[4] This curiosity and its de-familiarizations, however, largely retain this self-containedness and reflect back into the Paterian subject; the asceticism that Pater discusses in Marius and elsewhere is self-abnegation at the same time that it is the ultimate exercise in self-deliberation and indulgence. Thus, Paterian discourse can be seen as a series of oscillations from subject to object, from familiarity to strangeness. In Pater, the question to be asked when perceiving this strangeness is "What does this 'strangeness' mean to me?" Indeed, the concept of "strangeness" is itself produced by and dependent upon a subject that has learned to recognize and label an object as "strange."

Toward the end of "Prosper Mérimée" (1890), Pater addresses the question of disinterest and how it relates to

the subject by quoting Flaubert: "It has always been my rule to put nothing of myself in my works" (MS 36). Both Pater and Flaubert agree that he failed in this enterprise, but what is interesting about Pater's quotation is his own parenthetical paraphrase of Flaubert's claim of self-absence, which Pater takes to mean that Flaubert means (to be *disinterested* in his literary creations, so to speak)" (36). Taken at face value, Pater is clearly conflating "impersonality" and "disinterest." On the other hand, this conflation is troubled by the fact that Pater says right before quoting Flaubert that "self-effacement, or impersonality, in literary or artistic creation, is, after all, as little possible as a strict realism" (36), whereas disinterest is clearly possible for Pater. Separating these terms (personality/impersonality; interest/disinterest) is further complicated by his description on the preceding page of Mérimée's letters--those "uncontrollable movements of his own so carefully guarded heart": "The intimacy, the effusion, the so freely exposed personality of those letters does but emphasize the fact that *impersonality* was, in literary art, Merimee's central aim" (35). To read this quote as merely an emotionally "out of control" writing subject's wish for control by purging the personality would be reductive and misleading; within Pater's conception of a disinterested subjectivity, this desire is not for the destruction of the subject. Paterian disinterest, in other

words, is fueled and created by subjectivity and personality, elements that are not so easily jettisoned in favor of so-called impersonality.

Nor is the enabling power of subjectivity Pater's call for an aesthetic hedonism. Indeed, at the same time that he acknowledges the necessity of subjective experience, Pater sees a "pure" or exclusive subjectivity as restrictive and ultimately disillusioning. At the beginning of his "Prosper Mérimée," in his description of the post-Napoleonic disillusionment that turns to skepticism in nineteenth-century France, Pater explains how this skepticism led artists to "artificial stimulus" and eventually to be "imprisoned now in the narrow cell of [their] own subjective experience" (12).[5] The subjectivity that he describes, always finding its disappointing end in itself manifests itself in chronic *ennui*--a self-enclosing state which is a anathema to the Paterian subject.

Pater's explanation of this change from skepticism to eventual self-enclosure serves as a homology for the historical process from "ripeness" into decadence that he describes elsewhere. Early in his career, in the Preface to The Renaissance, the movement of disinterest into decadence, as its ends up in France, is one that Pater claims has yet to find its end in *ennui*:

> The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely

> decadence, as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascesis*, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth. (xxiii)

This early decadence is more ripe than rotten, and its practitioners still have enough of the original *ascesis* to prevent them from falling into exclusive preoccupation with self-stimulation. The homologous process that Pater describes eight years later in Marius the Epicurean takes the form of speculation on the use of philosophy, and although it unmistakably describes the same process from asceticism to decadence, the progression hardly ends in a "refined and comely decadence":

> For the variety of men's possible reflections on their experience, as that of experience itself, is not really so great as it seems; and as the highest and most disinterested ethical *formulae*, filtering down into men's everyday existence, reach the same poor level of vulgar egotism . . . . (184)

What Pater sees as a historical ripening process in the Renaissance, he sees here as the inevitable process of self-obsession in philosophy.

As these two passages testify, decadence or hedonism is offset in Pater by a consistent attention to asceticism. For Pater, detachment and purification comprise the discourse of asceticism. There is much overlap between these two modes and they often become conflated in Pater's brand of asceticism; purification can be a form of detachment and vice versa. Since to be disinterested involves differing modes of detachment, what Pater separates

or detaches and how he does so is thus a crucial question in any discussion of Paterian disinterest.

III

In his essay on "Style," Pater uses a telling analogy to describe literature's appeal to certain readers: " . . . all *disinterested* lovers of books, will always look to [literature], as to all fine art, for a refuge, a sort of cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the *actual* world" (18; emphasis added). Several "detachments" take place here. This "cloistral refuge," more obviously, acts as a shield not only from the "real" world but from a vaguely defined "vulgarity" therein. Such a separation invites numerous possible readings, but perhaps the more interesting for our purposes is the one that identifies the detachment here between disinterested "lovers of books" and those who, by default, must be "interested" book lovers. Disinterest acts as a hedge against the kinds of readings that may be unsuitable to the "disinterested." Disinterest is thus a sign of achievement, a label that acts as an educational, scholarly, as well as a political and social separation. Such a distinction is often manifested, as Wilde would perfectly exemplify, in a pose of indifference that marks the disinterested apart from the "vulgar" masses, the philistines. Pater's Marcus Aurelius, for example, turns "indifferently" from the vulgarity of the coliseum to "matters of public business" (ME 169).

Detachments, social or otherwise, are part and parcel with the discourse of disinterest. This should not strike us as particularly unusual until we examine the seemingly incongruous contexts within which Pater uses the term disinterest. Friendship, for example, is included among the many disinterested institutions. In this description of Marius's first meeting with Flavian in Marius the Epicurean, for instance, it is Flavian's detachment that paradoxically attracts Marius: "And, dating from the time of his first coming to school, a great friendship had grown up for him, in that life of so few attachments--the pure and disinterested friendship of schoolmates" (63). This separation, along with Flavian's "tone of reserve or gravity," makes Marius feel "something like friendship at first sight." Such qualities are enough to qualify Flavian as one of the disinterested, wherein the traits that separate are the very ones that provide for future closeness. Once one has been marked as disinterested, then a certain behavior--an air of "reserve or gravity"--is expected.

Although this disinterest is in some measure a pose, this does mean that the disinterested subject can merely take off the mask of indifference and become a fully interested and emotional person. In Marius's case, for instance, there are strong antecedents for his particular brand of disinterest. The father, who dies early in

Marius's life, but whose remains stay in the house with the family, bears a strong resemblance to other disinterested scholars that Pater describes in his essays: " . . . the father, dead ten years before, of whom, remembering but a tall, grave figure above him in early childhood, Marius habitually thought as a *genius* a little cold and severe," a man of "instinctive seriousness" (41; 43).[6] This scholarly "severity" and detachment in the father must have been passed along fairly early to Marius, who as a young boy examines his mother's grief at the death of her husband with much the same fascinated detachment as he will his manuscripts later in the novel. Her grief is a strange phenomenon completely outside himself: "All this Marius followed with a devout interest, sincerely touched and awed by his mother's sorrow" (45). It should not surprise us, at this point, to find that "interest" and "disinterest" are not mutually exclusive. Marius's fascination is an almost Kantian interest in phenomena, and his mother's grief "touche[s] and awe[s]" him in the same way that, say, a "strange dye" might. Where Kant isolates aesthetic response from teleology, Pater attempts to isolates his scholarly role from a social or an emotional--which is not to say an uninterested--one.

Since Paterian disinterest is entirely dependent on this ability to exclude, then the long process of becoming disinterested, or of finally assuming a "sovereign"

disinterest, as we will see, is marked by a systematic "purification." In the case of Marius, this exclusion and detachment is manifested, among other places, in his work:

> Already he blamed instinctively alike in his work and in himself, as youth so seldom does, all that had not passed a long and liberal process of erasure. The happy phrase or sentence was really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought. (122)

"Erasure" here is more than mere revision. We see the finished product as something "clean," something that resembles the product of an incisive mind--quite literally a mind that cuts and divides. The surgery metaphor is Pater's, and he often associates it with disinterest, such as in the Conclusion and in this passage from "Prosper Mérimée":

> Merimee, perhaps, may have had in him the making of a master of such science, disinterested, patient, exact: scalpel in hand, we may fancy, he would have penetrated far. But quite certainly he had something of genius for the exact study of history, for the pursuit of exact truth, with a keenness of scent as if that alone existed, in some special area of historic fact, to be determined by his own peculiar preferences. (MS 16)

Pater uses the word "exact" three times in this passage, and this repetition leads us to believe that the scholar's scalpel, which will somehow strike the unyielding surface of "exact truth," is necessary to cut through the cloudy flesh of confusion. This truth, however, this "special area of historic fact," and along with it the ability to wield the scalpel, is determined subjectively, by "peculiar

preferences." This relegation to the subjective, however, is not Kantian disinterest; we cannot here, or elsewhere in Pater, locate subjective authority, as does Kant, in "what we can presuppose about every other person." Disinterest--to extend Pater's metaphor--comes from learning to use the scalpel.

Pater's use of this metaphor and its implications are discussed more explicitly in this passage from Gaston de Latour, where we may detect, once again, a Kantian ability to divide faculties:

> To Gaston there was a kind of fascination, an actually aesthetic beauty, in the spectacle of that keen-edged intelligence, dividing evidence so finely, like some exquisite steel instrument with impeccable sufficiency, always leaving the last word loyally to the central intellectual faculty, in an entire disinterestedness. (104)

Not only does disinterest supply the tools that purify the "evidence," but it also contains the "central intellectual faculty." Because the very existence of disinterest is predicated on its "purity," we can count on its subjectivity, its "central intellectual faculty," to lead us to some kind of "truth." What this "truth" is for Pater wavers between his absolute definitions for art, scholarship, and so on and his often-stated belief that a common and objective standard of truth is impossible. In most cases, truth by way of disinterest, for Pater, is only possible through subjective interest.

Pater is quite aware, however, that investing everything in the subjective has its problems, and that is perhaps the chief reason why Pater's is not a "subjective universality," but a disinterested one available to a few. As we saw with "disinterested" friendship and in the way that Marius regards his family, emotional interference is the first thing that must be purged--a purification that comes in "the form of a resolve, as far as possible, to exclude regret and desire, and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind" (ME 113). If we associate emotions with the human subject, then this purification is a process of de-humanization, of trading the emoting subject for a "clean" or "keen-edged" subject whose "peculiar preferences" are not ones associated with the overwhelming majority of other human beings. It is not surprising, then, to find that death is disinterest in its purest form--the immolation of the ego in favor of a higher form, a more "gem-like flame" if you will. On his death bed, for example, Marius, after marveling at the people above him preparing his body for death, becomes a martyr in his death--someone who sacrifices the earthly noise of emotional and physical interference for a higher, more powerful form of disinterestedness. In this formulation, exhumation becomes an almost Micheletist interrogation for (disinterested) knowledge that is impossible in the living. As Pater and the villagers stand

over the bejeweled corpses of the Duke and his wife, we might imagine something more consequential than a bodily or chronological separation: a radical detachment between those who pretend disinterest and those who have achieved it.

For someone who champions a ravenous, all-consuming intellectual curiosity, such a purification is not always efficacious in scholarship. Although we should purge the impurities in ourself, says Pater, that same method is not necessarily applicable to what or how we read. Winckelmann, for instance, will forever be remembered chiefly as the teacher of Goethe precisely because he applied this surgical disinterest to his reading list: "He multiplied his intellectual force by detaching it from all flaccid interests. He renounced mathematics and law, in which his reading was considerable, all but the literature of the arts" (R 144). Although Pater is genuinely fascinated with Winckelmann's ability to cut the dead wood from his intellectual life, he ultimately acknowledges that this obstinate single-mindedness is intellectually undesirable, if not inferior. He does so by proposing Goethe himself as the antithesis to this intellectual cloistering:

> For Goethe, possessing all modern interests, ready to be lost in the perplexed currents of modern thought, he defines, in clearest outline, the eternal problem of culture--balance, unity with one's self, consummate Greek modelling. (182)

This dialectic between the ancient and the modern is a historical solution to Winckelmann's nostalgia (which Pater

emphatically shared) for the smooth, unambiguousness of Ancient Greece, and as a historical solution, it ultimately blends into Pater's third term--a heroic (and certainly Greek) disinterest in the midst of confusion.

Nor does Pater share Coleridge's determination to cling to absolutes in a relativistic world: "It was an effort, surely, an effort of sickly thought, that saddened his mind, and limited the operation of his unique poetic gift" (A 68-9). Nonetheless Pater calls this "sickly effort" a "disinterested struggle against the relative spirit" (68). Does "disinterested" here mean "philosophical," "scholarly," or perhaps even "reactionary"? The same gesture of purification that Winckelmann applies to reduce the confusion of his reading list, Coleridge uses here to shore up his walls against the modern world. By maintaining an unwavering absoluteness, Coleridge attempts to purify his historical moment by making history inconsequential. For Pater, this endeavor is disinterested, in that Coleridge's method is meticulous scholarship, but this instance and Winckelmann both bear witness that disinterest, for Pater, does not necessarily solve its own problems.

The fact that, for Pater, disinterest can be misused implies that it can also be used well, and since he uses disinterest to separate "the greater mind" from the rest, then it would follow that in the right hands, disinterest can be a vehicle of considerable power. Such power and

disinterest, suggests the narrator of Marius the Epicurean, implies not only a separation from the human condition, but even a hatred of it:

> 'O humanity!' he seems to ask, 'what hast thou done to me that I should so despise thee?'--And might not this be indeed the true meaning of kingship, if the world would have one man reign over it? The like of this: or some incredible, surely never to be realized, height of disinterestedness, in a king who should be the servant of all . . . . (191-2)

Disinterest in its manifestations of power occupies a contradictory position: while the ruler must serve the people of this world, he must also retain an intense distrust of this world. Pater's ideal disinterested ruler is Marcus Aurelius who, for instance, has "come to the condition of philosophical detachment he had affected as a boy, hardly persuaded to wear warm clothing, or to sleep in a more luxurious manner than on the bare floor" (ME 192). A self-imposed asceticism is synonymous with not only disinterest as power, in Pater, but any "true" disinterest. True, "sovereign" disinterest is neither a role nor an affectation, but something that comes from the context of a lifestyle where one is constantly reminded of the physical discomforts of the world.

Once at this highest incarnation of disinterest, the ruler can have no advisors, as Marius's narrator quotes Aurelius as saying: "'All is opinion, conception: No man can be hindered by another: What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are

safe:'" (193). Pater's narrator sees this statement in terms of politics: "And the first point in this true ministry, this culture, was to maintain one's soul in a condition of indifference and calm" (193). Once again "truth" comes not from some immutable source, but from "opinion, conception." While, again, this subjectivity may seem like relativism, we must remember that Aurelius, and Pater, have already separated "mean" opinions and conceptions from "disinterested" ones by separating the kinds of people that are capable of holding each.

While that gesture may trade relativism for dogma, in Pater, disinterest is its own housekeeper; it provides its own check on abuses. If a ruler is abusive, he is therefore not disinterested, however much he may try to affect this bearing. This description in Gaston de Latour describes such a ruler:

> In spite of his pretension to the Epicurean conquest of a kingly indifference of mind, the portrait of twenty years ago betrayed, not less than the living face with its roving, astonished eyes, the haggard soul of a haggard generation, whose eagerly-sought refinements had been after all little more than a theatrical make-believe--an age of wild people, of insane impulse, of homicidal mania. (67)

Power and the un-disinterested do not mix. After all, Pater says in his reading of Plato's Republic, it is "the hinge of Plato's whole political argument . . . that the ruinous divisions of Athens, of Greece, of the entire social community, is the want of disinterestedness in its rulers"

(PP 261). Although these rulers did not fall into "insane impulse" and "homicidal mania," this absence of disinterest allows them to appeal to "those exceptional high natures" and as a result they "'abound' therein exclusively 'in their own sense'" (261).

Although it may not appear so in Pater's Marcus Aurelius, the notion of a self-evident, self-policing disinterest can be a troubling one for Pater, particularly when it is masked as a kind of *noblesse oblige*: " . . . the disinterestedness of the powerful, their monastic renunciation of the world prizes most, above all the doctrine of a natural aristocracy with its 'privileges and also its duties'" (PP 249). In this reading of the Lacedaemonian, disinterest not only becomes power by birth right, but it is also an unassailable, unappealable organ of power, and we may wonder what terrible forms and manifestations those "monastic renunciation[s] of the world" may take against those forced to live in the world. To what extent, the question then becomes, is the persona in this description--"human will in the rigid, disinterested, renunciant career of Marcus Aurelius, its mortal coldness" (PP 48)--even capable of understanding human appeal?

Pater answers this question with Plato whose altruistic philosopher kings have

> this disinterestedness . . . [to] do what they will with their own, this indifference, this surrender, not of one's goods and time only, but of one's last resource, one's very home, 'for the

> greatest happiness of the greatest number'" (PP 259).

Although Pater does question Plato on the paradox of this motiveless utilitarian sacrifice, he also appeals to the same altruism in his constructions of the disinterested ruler. What, one might ask, is to keep Marcus Aurelius from become a genocidal tyrant, one who systematically kills the poor, all the while keeping his "disinterested" eye on the greater good for the greater number? And who is to impeach him--disinterest, by definition, being unimpeachable--if he does?

This political gap occurs at the separation of the disinterested from the un-disinterested. That division, whose authority also resides in a political gap, creates a politics that refers only to itself--much as the Paterian subject's aesthetic politics refers only to itself. There is, after all, little difference between Aurelius' statement--"What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it"--and Pater's: "What effect does it really produce on me?" Each statement marks authority safely inside the subject. Power, both political and aesthetic, is sent out after this initial appeal to the subject, but never returns for modification or appeal.

Perhaps, too, the aesthetic subject is itself on the receiving end of an unchecked power, like this autobiographical protagonist from Pater's "The Child in the House":

> Also then, for the first time, he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation to fair outward objects, and inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free . . . . and the longing for some undivined, entire possessions of them was the beginning of a revelation growing ever clearer . . . at times a seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, *a kind of tyranny of the senses over him.* (M 186; emphasis added)

This dialectic between freedom and enslavement, possessor and possessed, of euphoria and restraint, is one that informs much of Pater's writings. His own life, both public and private, was a struggle between the desire for a life of aesthetic experience and an equally strong desire for Grecian austerity. By extension, this struggle between the Des Esseintesien decadent on the one side and the Oxford don on the other in large measure explains his need for a disinterested and, as the scandals converged on him, an unimpeachable power that depended on sensory and scholarly interest and that appealed to no authority save its own--a subject comfortably enclosed and protected and powerful.[7]

IV

Considering the power that Pater identifies and manipulates in the disinterested subject, it should not surprise us to find disinterest implicated in the powerful enterprise of writing of history. Michel Foucault, for example, finds it necessary to exclude the consideration of disinterest in his study of the body in history. For him, such a study means that "where knowledge is concerned--one

abandons the opposition between what is 'interested' and what is 'disinterested', the model of knowledge and the primacy of the subject" (Discipline and Punish 28). Such a subject-obsessed opposition, Foucault implies, is invested with all manner of subjective sentiment and power, and deflects attention from a project that seeks to describe a "technology of the body" where the subject does not hold its historically powerful sway. Furthermore, he implies, it is no longer historically possible to maintain the Paterian paradox: that the subject can act in its own absence. Thus, all histories to this point have been histories of the subject, despite the professed subject matter. This is an assumption with which Burckhardt and Pater would in some measure agree. Whereas Foucault seeks to remove the contaminating influence of the subject, however, Pater, and Burckhardt, exploit the possibilities of their own assumptions: for Burckhardt, it is that the subject cannot be written out of a history that it has itself written; for Pater, it is that the subject can be refined from existence, even at its most powerful.

Like Foucault, Nietzsche sees the desire for what is disinterested as something that has been historically produced. It can be located genealogically as one result of "two thousand years" of Christian history. In 1888, he says,

> we are losing the center of gravity of virtue of which we lived; we are lost for a while. Abruptly

> we plunge into opposite valuations, with all the energy that such an extreme overvaluation of man has generated in man. (Will to Power 20)

One of these "opposite valuations" is a "contempt for what is 'natural,' for desire, for the ego: attempt to understand even the highest spirituality and art as the consequence of depersonalization and as *désintéressement*" (21). As we have seen in Pater, this self-contempt is nonetheless a production of that self. The act of self-erasure is itself the supreme act of self-announcement.

Pater's solution--to at once erase (or purify) and retain the subject, to reconcile the subject's absence and presence--is more consequential to the writing of history than a mere "plunge into opposite valuations," however. For one thing, Pater's subject excludes traditional historical accounts that pretend to be objective and comprehensive, or that are inextricably wrapped up in "facts." In the Leonardo essay, for example, he cites Vasari's story of a Medusa painted on a shield and concludes that because Vasari's story is "properly told" it "has more of the air of truth about it than anything else in the whole legend" (R 83). He finds more room for maneuver in his Imaginary Portraits because they are fiction at the same time that they are undoubtedly historical, and in his Appreciations--essays whose *raison d'etre* and method are determined by subjective concerns at the same time that they are historical accounts. Since the writing subject polices its

own territory, it becomes difficult to critique successfully his authority on these historical matters in the received ways.

More significantly, Pater's disinterested subject becomes the framework--the first writing that establishes the palimpsest--beneath the history that he writes. Like the palimpsest, it disappears as it is written upon and thus fulfills Pater's requirement that the subject be absent at the point where it exerts its most power. Like Marius, who achieves supreme disinterest at the moment of his death, Pater's histories, indeed, become the production of a subject that is nowhere to be found. In this way, as Foucault implies in his discussion of the "primacy of the subject," all histories *by* Pater are histories *of* Pater. On the other hand, discussing the Paterian subject can become an exercise in futility: like Duke Carl's anachronistic and failed maneuvers, and like those who attempt to exhume old forms from the palimpsest, recovering a subject that has been written over, and yet still exerts its power, is a historical enterprise that provides for its own impossibility.

Notes

1. The term "disinterestedness" is the word commonly used to mean "the quality of being disinterested." I have decided instead to use the word "disinterest" to mean the "concept of disinterestedness" or a "theoretical" disinterestedness.

2. David Bromwich describes an exclusively British tradition of "disinterestedness" in his essay "The Genealogy of Disinterestedness"--one that includes Hazlitt as well as Arnold, Pater, and Wilde. While Pater was certainly familiar with Hazlitt, my contention here is that there are specific elements of Kant and Arnold that Pater appropriates in his use of disinterest.

3. This is a widely-debated passage in Pater studies. Donald Hall, in his editorial notes to The Renaissance, says that the "me" here echoes the "me" that Goethe would invoke to subvert readings based on historical consensus--not at all opposed to Pater's aim here. U.C. Knoepflmacher in "Arnold's Fancy and Pater's Imagination: Exclusion and Incorporation" sees Pater's "me" as a method of consolidation and uses it to point out how this Paterian incorporation differs from Arnoldian exclusion. Again, this reading is more or less along the lines of what I have identified as the Arnoldian act of divesting interest and the Paterian act of disinterest through subjective interest.

4. Bromwich description of Pater's desire for experience that will alienate him from himself is very much similar to what I discuss in Chapter Five in terms of Pater's desire to break from the "tyranny of the senses" in "The Child in the House."

5. Perhaps Pater is thinking here of Baudelairian concept of a systemic *ennui*, or of Huysmans' Des Esseintes whose dedication to external stimuli always inevitably fails him.

6. As did Pater's father, but too early for him to have any memory of it. For discussions on some of the biographical and psychological implications for such a separation, see Perry Miesel, The Absent Father, and Gerald Monsman, Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography.

7. It has been common in accounts of Pater's troubles at Oxford to depict Pater as victimized and acquiescent. In Masculine Desire, Richard Dellamora's recent study on homosexuality in Victorian England, however, he depicts a refreshingly activist Pater who, both covertly (in "Diaphaneitè," for example) and overtly (in "Winckelmann," for example), attempted to advance the cause of the homosexual in the face of repressive English laws.

CHAPTER SIX

WRITING IT "BETTER, OVER AGAIN": WALTER PATER AND VICTORIAN BIOGRAPHY

In the preface to his Eminent Victorians--a collection of four brief, selective, even impressionistic "biographies"--Lytton Strachey describes the context of Victorian biography that he is working against, and thus from:

> Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead--who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, or detachment, or design? They are as familiar as the *cortege* of the undertaker, and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism. (viii-ix)

Whereas Strachey locates this "fatness" in the Victorian biography-as-accumulation approach, Harold Nicolson finds a similar indulgence in the Victorians' religious didacticism, opting himself for a kind of "pure" biography, or at least one in which morality is not foregrounded:

> It is this religious earnestness which is responsible for the catastrophic failure of Victorian biography. Just as in the seventeenth century the early current of pure biography was checked by metaphysical preoccupations, so was the full and sparkling stream of our riper tradition rendered fat and sluggish by the evangelicalism of the Victorians. (111)

This religious impulse, Nicolson continues, too often resolves itself into a "dualism," where man is either good or evil, mortal or immortal. "There is no such dualism in man," replies Nicolson; "there is personality, and that is all" (111).

Its "fatness" and evangelicalism made the Victorian age the favorite slow-moving target of the Moderns. For T.S. Eliot, Pater "is always primarily the moralist" (Essays 353). Pater's protests to the contrary, and despite Pater's inclination in his imaginary portraits to "emphasize whatever is morbid or associated with physical malady," his "art for art's sake" is, for Eliot, "a theory of ethics" (353-4).[1] Eliot's reading of Pater, in this regard, is much like his reading of Baudelaire: like Baudelaire, whom Eliot sees as an unwitting Christian, Pater is moralistic in spite of himself.

Although we may indeed detect in the Conclusion to the Renaissance a vague missionary zeal, problems abound, despite Eliot's qualifications, in calling Pater as a "moralist." Concerned as he is with "personality" as the alternative to an easy dualism, Pater's sensibility more closely resembles Nicolson's corrective to the Victorian age. Pater's Marius the Epicurean, upon which Eliot's argument focuses and in reference to which he says, "I do not believe Pater, in this book, has influenced a single first-rate mind of a later generation" (356), is nothing if

not a critique of dualistic theological or philosophical systems.[2] Although Pater's "imaginary portraits" represent for Eliot nothing more than the morality of morbidity, Pater--himself the subject of "two fat volumes"[3]--offers in them, and in other of his "biographical" forays, a distinct challenge to the format and assumptions of Victorian biography.

The fact that Pater's name is not necessarily synonymous with the art of biography testifies to this "challenge." The problems that Strachey enumerates above--"slipshod style," "lamentable lack of selection, or detachment"--Pater addresses directly. If we have difficulty calling anything Pater wrote biographical, it is because his work does not announce itself, in either format or style, as biography. Some, however, have already identified Pater's experiments with the form; Ira Nadel, for instance, includes Pater's Imaginary Portraits, along with Lamb's "Conversations with Elia" and Landor's Imaginary Conversations, as one of the experiments in nineteenth century biography, or "pseudo-biography" (185).

The problems with situating Pater in the discourse of biography may have more to do with the difficulty of locating the "borders" of biography than they do with his work. Historically, biography has never enjoyed a discursive stability; unlike historical or biblical narrative, biography's status as representation, as

mediation, has always been foregrounded. Thus, Paul Kendall asks us to consider "how uneasily biography lies between historical writing and belles lettres, somewhat disdainfully claimed by both" (3). Even Thomas Carlyle, for whom it is "almost the one thing needful," biography is still incomplete without the proper reading. It has long been the custom to refer to a particular biography as "*a* life" rather than "*the* life," as if to underscore that the writing ("graph") part of the equation was as important as, if not more important than, the "life." Today, as Daniel Albright points out,

> most readers are comfortable with the notion that biography is a species of fiction; that a biographer, if he agrees to observe some principle of non-contradiction of contemporary written sources, is free to invent, to ascribe any sort of convenient and striking identity to his subject. (200)

Indeed, it has become a commonplace to do away with this division altogether and neatly conflate the two discourses: "biography, or autobiography, *is* fiction."

What is so problematic about such a conflation is that it ignores the complex discursive history of what we call biography.[4] In other words, it ignores the history of biography as a form of discourse. We should include within this discursive history biography's oft-stated acknowledgment of its own status as representation and, in turn, the difficulty with squaring this representational status with an incontestable "truth." At the same time, for

example, that Browning biographer Park Honan says the biographer's job is to "be faithful to historical facts," to "make up nothing," and to give "an order that will be truthful," he qualifies these statements by allowing that "[n]obody in history lived life in a paragraph, a chapter" (10-11). Other examples of biographer's self-consciousness about the form are innumerable. Rather than looking for a simple "truth" test, anyone studying biography must look at all the complex problems of representation the form raises, dramatizes, and discusses.[5]

I

Included within this history, would be Pater, who constantly addresses this anxiety of representation. In a sense, Pater writes himself into an irresolvable bind: his "biographical" works often seem to be motivated by a desire for the essential subject, even as he acknowledges, privileges, and manipulates the *representation* of this subject. His portrait of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, is constructed from others' portraits of him, most notably Vasari's. I do not point this out to make some kind of Rankian distinction between the importance of primary over secondary sources. Such a dependence does, however, indicate an interest in representation that separates Pater from a Rankian historicism of reconstruction. Leonardo *wie er eigentlich gewesen ist* gives way, in Pater's work, to Leonardo da Vinci as he has been represented.

The "Leonardo" essay is, in fact, constructed "biographically."[6] From the beginning of the essay to the end, Pater imitates, manipulates, questions, and extends the form of biography. Indeed, the first sentence throws us headlong into the discourse of biography: "In Vasari's life of Leonardo da Vinci as we now read it there are some variations from the first edition"(R 77). Leonardo da Vinci as a transcendent subject is not the focus: biographical representation *and* how we read that representation is the subject in question. Instead of adopting Vasari as a faithful medium for the life of Leonardo, we are dealing in "editions," making sure that the text is situated "as we now read it." "Lives" are, in fact, bound up in discourse; in "the second edition," for instance, "the image [of Leonardo] was changed into something fainter and more conventional" (77).

Just-the-facts biography is relegated in Pater to "busy antiquarianism" (101), the activity of those for whom history is the vain restoration of a golden past, and for whom history has not shifted to the level of representation. If such a shift means that the monolithic "life" of the subject multiplies into "lives," and that what was once seen as the "real" figure begins to fade, so much the better. Pater sacrifices the transcendent biographical subject for a hermeneutics of "strangeness," as if imitating Leonardo's genius, which is characterized by "the tendency to lose

itself in a refined grace and mystery" (77). That a staggering number of the paintings and records that document Leonardo's life have disappeared is, within this Paterian mystification, no great matter. Much like Strachey in his indictment of Victorian biography, Pater betrays a disregard for the minutiae required in this kind of "antiquarianism":

> For others remain the editing of the thirteen books of manuscripts, and the separation by technical criticism of what in his reputed works is really his, from what is only half his, or the work of his pupils. (78)

Instead, Pater saves for himself, "a lover of strange souls," the analysis of what Leonardo's works mean. Representation, even when factually ungrounded, clearly plays a decisive role in this determination of meaning: "The *legend*, as corrected and enlarged by its critics, may now and then intervene to support the results of this analysis" (78). One's "legend" is palimpsestic and thus is to be written upon by subsequent readings or, in Pater's terms, "corrections" and "enlargements." "Facts," apart from these readings, in their supposedly immutable form, play an insignificant part in this conception.

Pater's de-emphasis of facts may explain his attraction to Vasari's representation of Leonardo. Some of Vasari's "facts," Pater concedes, are "invention," but since these stories are "properly told," they have "more of the air of truth about [them] than anything else in the whole legend" (83). This essay's careful disdain for the "facts" also

serves Pater's own manipulation of his sources, especially Vasari. For a writer whose work draws on so many sources of knowledge, notes and acknowledgments are scarce in Pater.[7] Such manipulations are, for our purposes, crucial elements of Pater's conception of a kind of intertextual biography, in which thick layers of representation are orchestrated by his reading.

Pater tells us, matter-of-factly, that "[t]wo ideas were especially confirmed in [Leonardo], as reflexes of things that had touched his brain in childhood beyond the depth of other impressions--the smiling of women and the motion of great waters" (82). What is perhaps more interesting than how this "fact" obviously prefaces his reading of *La Gioconda* is his use of Vasari as its source. In Vasari's description, these incidents in Leonardo's life are not nearly so emphasized:

> . . . he not only worked in sculpture, doing some heads of women smiling, which were casts, and children's heads also, executed like a master, but also prepared many architectural plans and elevations, and he was the first, though so young, to propose to canalise Arno from Pisa to Florence. (2: 156-7)

Pater's embellishments are intriguing: what Pater calls "ideas," Vasari lists as items in a chronicle. Once transformed, these items are singled out from Vasari's list (Pater makes no mention of the children's heads), and are bestowed with an import for which Pater has no source. How, for instance, Leonardo is touched "beyond the depth of other

impressions" is Pater's invention. Leonardo da Vinci thus becomes a Paterian Imaginary Portrait, and questions that surround Pater's use and abuse of sources become just so much antiquarianism. The predictable criticism--that such manipulation is dishonest and unbecoming a scholar--only goes so far. Such a criticism begs the question by assuming the impermeability of the line between fiction and scholarship, whereas Pater's work suggests that this line creates an autonomy for the two disciplines that they have never enjoyed.

Pater's biographical embellishments also include a "skeptical" reading of his sources. In preparing us for his infamous reading of *La Gioconda*, for instance, Pater reports as "legend" what Vasari reports as "fact":[8]

> That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected? (98)

Vasari, for whom this account is clearly not just legend, does not consider this "presence of mimes and flute-players" to be "artificial means":

> Mona Lisa was very beautiful, and while Lionardo was drawing her portrait he engaged people to play and sing, and jesters to keep her merry, and remove that melancholy which painting usually gives to portraits. (2: 164)

As I have so far described it, Pater's "Leonardo da Vinci" might seem nothing more than a discussion of Vasari's

reading--not a biography at all. Pater, however, frames the essay biographically by aping the "just-the-facts" progress of biography. For instance, he often begins paragraphs mimicking the dry, passive voice of the scholar: "The year 1483 . . . is fixed as the date of his visit to Milan . . . " (84-5); "The *Last Supper* was finished in 1497; in 1498 the French entered Milan . . . " (95); "The remaining years of Leonardo's life are more or less years of wandering" (96). We should also note that Pater makes a distinction between this chronological progression and his version of "aesthetic" biography. "During the years at Florence," Pater tells us, "Leonardo's history is the history of his art; for himself, he is lost in the bright cloud of it. The *outward history* begins again in 1502 . . . " (99; emphasis added).

This "outward history" can be imitated, mastered, represented, and thus separated from Leonardo's "aesthetic" history. While the antiquarian obsession with "what really happened" ends with the documented sources of this "outward history," aesthetic history includes the act of reading these sources which for Pater takes precedence. Pater often reminds us that reading itself is "action," even going so far as to show us this act physically taking place: "Let us take some of these drawings, and pause over them awhile; and, first, one of those at Florence--the heads of a woman and a little child, set side by side, but each in its own

separate frame" (90). As with the villagers in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" who are confronted by the unearthed corpses of a century past, or as with the narrator of "Denys l'Auxerrois" standing before the huge walls of tapestry depicting the fate of Denys, the reincarnation of Dionysus, the act of historical reading for Pater demands a physical confrontation. To stand before an object is to force oneself to acknowledge at once chronological difference and, at the same time, the object's apparent transcendence of that difference. Thus, the many previous readings that Pater supposedly drew upon for his own reading of *La Gioconda* become a series of attempts to reconcile the painting's "timelessness" with their own temporality as reading subjects: each reading of the painting represents a mortal figure before a painting so often constructed as immortal. Pater's reading of *La Gioconda* is yet another attempt:

> The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea. (99)

Pater's reading of *La Gioconda* underscores the importance of aesthetic over antiquarian biography. Antiquarian *accoutrements*, such as the "facts" and trivia surrounding the painting's production, are de-emphasized along with Leonardo's role--as if anything associated with

temporality would necessarily wither before this vampiric image. As Pater emphasizes throughout The Renaissance, aesthetic reading finds its urgency in the fact that we cannot escape mortality. Thus, his "fear" in this reading proceeds from the realization of the failure to transcend time. For Pater, such a painting clearly represents a history that our antiquarian chronologies fail in representing.

Thus, Pater has a stake in making Leonardo, the creator of this timelessness, the ideal with which he attempts to align himself in the essay. One of the rhetorical strategies that Pater employs is to read Leonardo in terms of Pater's own function as reader, scholar, and artist, and he punctuates his renderings of Leonardo with characterizations that he might use to describe himself.[9] For instance, the Leonardo that he describes, who "learned here the art of going deep, of tracking the sources of expression to their subtlest retreats, the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled" (81), could well be Pater, the scholar who leaves the definition of abstract beauty behind for the almost scientific processes of aesthetics: "His end is reached when he had disengaged that virtue, and noted it" (R xxi). Indeed, we may ask what difference there is between Pater's conception of himself and of his Leonardo in this description of scholarly anxiety:

> Sometimes this curiosity came in conflict with the desire of beauty; it tended to make him go too far below that outside of things in which art really begins and ends. This struggle between the reason and its ideas, and the senses, the desire of beauty, is the key to Leonardo's life at Milan--his restlessness, his endless retouchings, his odd experiments with colour. How much must he leave unfinished, how much recommence! His problem was the transmutation of ideas into images. (88)

It may, in fact, be a condition peculiar to the biographer to fancy a resemblance to his subject, or to see the subject as his own (desired) image. Pater often tends to reconcile art, philosophy, theology, and other fields of knowledge under the banner of "curiosity." Within this reconciliation, it would be a short step to assume a connection among the mutually curious, among all those who come to art "for its own sake."[10] Established thus subjectively, for Pater the reviser, the experimenter, the writer consumed with time and the "transmutation of ideas," the boundary between biography and autobiography in the "Leonardo" essay becomes nebulous and ultimately arbitrary.

II

In an 1878 letter to George Grove, then the editor of Macmillan's, Pater tries to divert "The Child in the House" from autobiography: "I call the M.S. a portrait, and mean readers, as they might do on seeing a portrait, to begin speculating--what came of him?" (Letters 30).[11] As some of the earliest reviews were quick to point out, Marius the Epicurean is what became of Florian Deleal, the protagonist of "The Child in the House."[12] That Marius, set in second-

century Rome, could also be considered autobiographical testifies to the difficulty in applying received definitions of autobiography to Pater. His choice of the word "portrait" over the many other more recognizable terms indicates, as it does for the other imaginary portraits, a questioning and manipulation of the rhetoric of fiction, biography and autobiography, and historical representation. For this reason, even the traditional assumption that "The Child in the House" is autobiographical should be scrutinized.

In the first long paragraph of "The Child in the House," Pater calls into question the very notion of how we appropriate autobiographical material. The phases of memory in this first paragraph act as a causal chain, continuing until Florian reaches a state where he can begin reconstructing his childhood. As the maneuvers in this first paragraph indicate, however, this appropriation is not the simple triggering of what becomes a miraculously unrestrained flood of memories. The "portrait" announces itself as fiction, complete with the rhetorical convention of a "messenger," who activates the labyrinthine processes of memory. Although this messenger recalls, among others, Shelley's "traveller" from "Ozymandias," Coleridge's witness in "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and the *bric-a-brac* dealer in Pater's own "Denys L'Auxerrois," the "message" is not a testimonial, or even a story, but the casual mention of a

town, one that he only "chance[s]" to name. Despite Pater's use of the rhetoric of the parable, memory is portrayed in terms of arbitrariness. Pater, through Florian, depends on a "chance" catalyst to allow him to enter his own memory. Memory, by implication, is fundamentally unreliable.

If this arbitrariness condemns us to forgetting the majority of our lives, it also enables Pater's Florian to enter into a mode of supernatural memory that accounts for much of the detail that he had completely forgotten when the portraits begins:

> And that night, like a reward for his pity, a dream of that place came to Florian, a dream which did for him the office of the finer sort of memory, bringing its object to mind with a great clearness, yet, as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself, and *above ordinary retrospect*. (MS 172; emphasis added)

Within this shift "above" routine memory, the rhetoric of fiction becomes displaced into the rhetoric of autobiography. This transcendental shift throws Florian into the realm of *remembered* senses. The yoking of senses and memory then becomes the "facts" of autobiography:

> . . . the fashion of its doors, its hearths, its windows, the very scent upon the air of it, was with him in sleep for a season; only, with tints more musically blent on wall and floor, and some finer light and shadow running in and out along the curves and angles, and with all its little carvings daintier. (172-3)

The intensity of this sensory anachronism results in a kind of post-coital wistfulness for Florian "at the thought of

almost thirty years which lay between him and that place" (173).

Instead of revealing to Florian the cruel mirage of anachronistic movement, this "accident" of a dream enables him to enter an anachronism of self, wherein he is able to inhabit the very "process of brain-building by which we are, each one of us, what we are" (173). Like the *madeleine* of Proust that triggers Marcel's rewriting of the past, this "brain-building," represented by the house, is also half-material and "half-spiritualised":

> [H]e could watch the better, over again, the gradual expansion of the soul which had come to be there--of which, indeed, through the law which makes the material objects about them so large an element in children's lives, it had actually become a part; inward and outward being woven through and through each other into one inextricable texture--half, tint and trace and accident of homely colour and form, from the wood and the bricks; half, mere soul stuff, floated thither from *who knows how far*. (173; emphasis added).

What is "better" is what Florian lives "over again." What can be re-structured, fitted with a new chronology, and rewritten can also finally usurp both the "tyranny of the senses" (186) and the tyranny of the impression the events leave. This re-writing destroys the integrity of these "first impressions" and achieves a kind of "inextricable texture"--a sensory metaphor for a mystified intertextuality, "half, mere soul stuff."

The paradox of what is, then, a "material mysticism" becomes the paradigm of the portrait: a sensory and

material, but remembered and spiritualized, realm. As the "adjustments" that some critics have performed on this "autobiographical" story suggest (the remembered "cry on the stair" [183], for instance, is said to recall the death of Pater's grandmother, not his father)[13] this material mysticism depends on fiction as much as it does on what has "actually occurred." I do not suggest here a dichotomy between fact and fiction--at least not in the general sense. It is not my desire, in other words, to read this portrait against what really occurred in Pater's life, as useful as such studies may be. Instead, I see "fiction," in this case, as what becomes of the "facts"--the events, "real" or not--when subjected to what Pater calls a memory that is "above ordinary retrospect," in which facts become "better" as they are written "over again." What Pater sees as the prominence of this reconstructed realm over "what really happened" may be evidenced by the portrait's status as the only Pater-sanctioned version of his life at this stage.

Once the dual action of the material and the mystical is enacted, the portrait can begin in earnest: "In the house and garden of his dream he saw a child moving, and could divide the main streams at least of the winds that had played on him, study so the first stage in that mental journey" (174). Lest we forget that this is a "remembered" chronicle in which mediation has been foregrounded, Pater begins his portrait of the child by separating the two

incarnations of Florian. "[H]e saw the child moving," Pater writes, describing Florian's view of himself.

It should not surprise us that the creator of the "better" incarnation is also the familiar figure of the Paterian disinterested scholar, whose project it is to study this radically separated embodiment of himself. The scholar, in other words, uses chronological separation as a buffer between the two selves whose potential connection would undermine this carefully constructed disinterest, this model of "comeliness and dignity" and "urbanity" (176). The nostalgia implicit in such a project is checked by this distanced reading, which Pater concedes is "mechanical" and artificial. The threatening paradox of subjectivity and disinterest, which the genius of Marius the Epicurean's Marcus Aurelius manages to ignore in matters political, is further complicated when Pater creates this distance between different incarnations of the self.

This is not to say that Pater can sustain such a separation. The action of the portrait could be described as an oscillation between autobiography and biography, between first and third persons. For instance, despite Pater's replacement of the third person with which he begins the story with a kind of generalized first person, this voice becomes, clearly, a personalized first person:

> Our susceptibilities, the discovery of our powers, manifold experiences . . . belong to this or the other well-remembered place in the material habitation--that little white room with the window

> across which the heavy blossoms could beat so peevishly in the wind, with just that particular catch or throb, such a sense of teasing in it, on gusty mornings. (178)

Because we may not be able to associate the tease of heavy blossoms with universal experience, this passage represents the slippage of (auto)biographical authority within the desire to assume a commonality of history. Such a desire becomes nakedly apparent when Pater attempts a shift back to this commonality:

> . . . a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions; and irresistibly, little shapes, voices, accidents--the angle at which the sun in the morning fell on the pillow--become parts of the great chain wherewith we are bound. (178)

In both examples, Pater signifies this shift to the particular with a dash, as if to maintain at least a perfunctory distance between the two. Such a distance is problematized, however, by the ambiguity of the "great chain" that binds us either to our separate past selves or to some common experience.

In any case, whatever common experience these may be must be qualified by cultural difference. Although these descriptions may resonate

> for the Englishman, for me and you, with the closely-drawn white curtain and the shaded lamp; that, quite other, for the wandering Arab, who folds his tent every morning, and makes his sleeping place among haunted ruins, or in old tombs. (179)

Although he calmly acknowledges it, this difference indicates that Pater's neat bifurcation between past and

present selves, or personal and general selves, is not as efficacious as he had thought. His contention, for example, that all he has described "is for Englishmen at least typically home-life" and a kind of "general human instinct" (180) shows the gaps in any project that establishes itself as general experience. Assuming an experience that cuts across class and gender betrays a fear of solipsism, rather than a safe retreat within it. The confines of conventional *auto*biography, in other words, would exclude him from a world within which it was so vital that he participate.

This oscillation between autobiography and biography may be related to the oscillation between the sensory and the transcendent in the portrait. As we have seen, Pater identifies a kind of "tyranny" associated with the sensory world; although The Renaissance addresses the value of sensory knowledge, a *complete* dependence on the senses is also a kind of self-confinement. Fearing this isolation, he looks for ways in which the senses, the very imprisoning structures themselves, may be appropriated to transcend this confinement. Early on, for example, Florian detects this anxiety in the very enthusiasm over what seems to be immediate experience:

> . . . he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation to fair outward objects, an inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free. A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him; and the longing for undivined, entire

> possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, . . . of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him. (186)

These "outward objects" and their "inexplicable excitement" are both a threat to and a harbinger of the confinement of the self. The control-or-be-controlled approach to this new knowledge indicates his fear of the beyond. Knowledge, immediate and delirious, can be seductive and possessive.

To a certain extent, the two sides of this anxiety were played out in the controversy over The Renaissance, during which Pater was forced to assume an uncomfortably visible, radically subjectivist position that made him an easy target for those who were quick to line up in opposition.[14] By the time "The Child in the House" was published in 1878, Inman says, Pater had learned his lesson:

> Never again would he make pronouncements that could be regarded as a creed, and never again, speak recklessly about love or religion. He had learned to engage in controversy indirectly, to convey some of his freshest and best insights under the names of other writers, to express his sorrow, his sense of victimization, and his homoerotic longing through historical and mythical figures. . . . (1874-1877 xlix)

In a biographical sense, then, Pater's reticence towards univocal positions is a result of a manifestly pragmatic decision to maintain a cloak of texts around his secret life. Whatever exigencies his professional life demanded, however, do not completely explain Pater's intellectual distaste for anything resembling a "creed," and even in The

Renaissance itself, as we see in his essays on "Pico Della Mirandola" and "Leonardo da Vinci," he tries to avoid committing himself to any single position. To the extent that The Renaissance and its reception wrote him into a "philosophy of the senses," this would indeed be a "tyranny" from which "he half longed to be free."

"The Child in the House" raises that very question: to what extent can anyone be "free" from his own previous incarnations? Florian remembers, as a child, walking with his mother through a cemetery and chancing upon a child's open grave:

> And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children do sometimes die, the physical horror of death . . . . No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things any longer abroad in the world for his protection! only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see. (191)

This "figure" that he may or may not see is the ghost of the child, who is like the other ghosts he hears about from the "broken talk" of the neighborhood women:

> [The ghosts] were not so motionless as they looked, but led a secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes . . . . All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning--an odd *irreconcilable* new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence. (191; emphasis added)

What exactly is "irreconcilable" here? Or more to the point, what two entities are trying to be reconciled? The child's ghost is, no doubt, out of place in the house

defined by familiarity, but leaving the reading there ignores that this, like any memory, is a representation produced exclusively from the reading. That is to say, the ghost's "uncertain presence" is only "present" in the story itself; that a ghost may have really sat on the young Pater's bed is irrelevant. Thus displaced, the ghost haunting the memory of Florian is his own present-day incarnation of himself as a child. The elements that cannot be reconciled here are this incarnation and the child that dies as Florian grows older. Thus, the glimpse into the grave is terrifying, not just because he realizes that death is unfair to children too, but because he knows that the child must *always* die and that, once dead, can never be retrieved or reconciled. All that is left is the ghost of the child who will forever haunt the remembered house.

Thus, this ghost and other "timeless" entities that inhabit a place of familiarity become testimony to the poverty of anachronism:

> Afterwards he came to think of those poor, home-returning ghosts, which all men have fancied to themselves--the *revenants*--pathetically, as crying, or beating with vain hands at the doors, as the wind came, their cries indistinguishable in it as a wilder note. (192)

Attempting to "come again," unchanged by time, to claim a memory that has irretrievably changed is impossible, and such is the case with autobiography in "The Child in the House." While autobiography demands a certain re-visitation of past incarnations, it also demands that these

incarnations be kept separate--identifiable, at the very least, by chronological difference.

For this reason, autobiography constantly rewrites its supposed subjects. Autobiography is itself constituted by collections of chronologically specific incarnations, and its readings of the past change each time it is rewritten. Thus, any autobiography is never "definitive," since it is defined by moments that shift culturally, historically, and chronologically each time they are recounted. I believe that it is this anxiety of representation that Pater identifies in the "fictional" autobiography of "The Child in the House." Although timetables are inserted by biographical studies of this portrait, Pater has no use for them. He employs instead a more useful means of chronological separation by placing the two incarnations of the self side-by-side, irreconcilable.

III

The instability of autobiography leads to some of Pater's more interesting experiments with the form, most notably Marius the Epicurean (1885) and the unfinished Gaston de Latour (1888). But nowhere in Pater do I think more is at stake in autobiographical representation than in his imaginary portrait "A Prince of Court Painters" (1885). Like "The Child in the House," the portrait is a first-person narrative, but Pater saves us the trouble of wondering, as we might in "The Child in the House," whether

this or that incident actually happened to *him* by displacing the action chronologically (1701-1721) and by telling the story through a female narrator, who is both implicated in and separated from the action.

What also makes this portrait interesting may, at first, seem to be Pater's attempt to bypass the problems of representing a female narrator. The subtitle of the portrait is "Extracts from an Old French Journal," and that is what they are: dated and edited "primary sources." While these would at first seem to represent the absence of editorial intrusion, as we shall see, such is hardly the case. How Pater negotiates the mock objectivity of these "extracts" with a feminine voice that he constructs as objective, benign, and altruistic raises a whole range of questions about the authority and truth of autobiography, and thus of historical representation.

Since Marie-Marguerite Pater is the sole voice in this historical representation, she should be examined in terms of how Pater situates her in relation to the machinations of the early eighteenth-century French art world. She is the sister of Jean-Baptiste Pater (1696-1736), a protégé of the great French painter, Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721).[15] She entertains a vague, and unrequited, infatuation for Watteau, and she seems to be privy to insights to his personality of which even he is unaware. Apparently, she also has the ability to foresee events long before they

happen, such as Watteau's future death from consumption when he goes to England--"Ah me! I feel it may be the finishing stroke. To have run into the native country of consumption!" (40)--and, seventy-two years before its inauguration, the French Revolution, that time of "fraternity, liberty, humanity" (33).

One question we may want to ask about Marie-Marguerite Pater's position as the portrait's sole authority is the following: why not someone else? Why not her brother, who actually spent a great deal of time with Watteau? Or if historical credibility is a consideration, why not Watteau himself? The quick answer to such questions might be that the portrait is not "about" Jean-Antoine Watteau. We simply assume that he is the most important subject of this portrait. Indeed, if we compare him to the subjects of the other portraits--Duke Carl of Rosenmold, Denys l'Auxerrois, Sebastian van Storck--it would seem that, on a structural level at least, Watteau is this portrait's focus. We should remember, however, that this is the only portrait in the volume that does not take the subject's name as its title. One might even argue that the title refers to Jean-Baptiste Pater, and not to Watteau at all.

Watteau is, in fact, only one of three subjects in the portrait, the most important of whom is Marie-Marguerite herself. Even when she is not directly discussing Watteau or her brother, she is there: reading the paintings, reading

the landscape architecture, making judgments, editing. The actions that occur elsewhere--such as the travels and experiences of Watteau and her brother--are red herrings, if you will, something to deflect our attention from her, the figure for whom "objectivity" is so important. She is also the result of a curious rhetorical maneuver: she is Pater's only woman narrator. In answering why Pater requires a feminine authority for this portrait, we will need to examine how this feminine voice is appropriated. What, for instance, characterizes this voice, and what attempts does Pater make to distinguish this female narrator from the men in the portrait? And, more crucially, to what uses can such a figure, so displaced from the "action," be put? And finally, what questions does such a narrator raise about historical representation?

At the same time that such a position, as we shall see, is problematized by Pater's manipulation of sources, Marie-Marguerite stands in for a kind of historical objectivity. She has little stake, or so we are to believe, in the maneuverings of the art world. She even describes herself as a "tame, unambitious soul" (8). Such an impossibly distant self-judgment, however, calls attention to its own "objectivity," especially when we realize that this "tameness" also requires that she be removed from the action whenever possible. Consequently, we constantly see her being left behind: Watteau leaves for Paris, and she remains

behind; her brother leaves for Paris, and she remains behind; during a walk in the country, Jean-Baptiste dances with a previously unmentioned "little sister"--instead of with her--who appears in the text and then is never heard from again; even when she is physically close to the others in the portrait, there remains a significant distance between them: "As for me, I suffocate this summer afternoon in this pretty *Watteau* chamber of ours, where Jean-Baptiste is at work so contentedly" (30).

Her voice in the proceedings endures a similar "suffocation," despite her paradoxical role as the portrait sole authority, and despite the fact that she describes her journal as the only place where she is free from this suffocation:

> One's journal, here in one's solitude, is of service at least in this, that it affords an escape for vain regrets, angers, impatience. One puts this and that angry spasm into it, and is delivered from it so. (39)

Such spasms of anger, however, have been so carefully edited that this bit of metacommentary becomes a gap that stands in for these emotions, and into which they disappear. What we see instead is a radically disinterested and impossibly altruistic voice--the silent action behind the action of a history legitimated by public documentation. The document that speaks of *her* actions is edited, relegated to the "personal" (read "sealed") journal. As in this example when Watteau, though broke, decides to journey to Italy, her

public action must remain silenced: "Could I save enough by careful economies for that purpose? It might be conveyed to him by some indirect way that would not offend" (15). Her voice is imprisoned by these social proprieties in the same way that we often see her surrounded, and suffocated, by the so-called *Watteau* chamber--the Pater's *salon* that Watteau "take[s] into his head to paint and decorate" (20)--surrounded by the art that she helps to sustain, but for which she cannot speak publicly.[16]

It would be difficult to argue that Marie-Marguerite's motivation for this sense of sacrifice is her romantic desire for Watteau. Despite the fact that such an infatuation is only vaguely hinted at in the text, when Watteau breaks with her brother, she quickly transfers this self-renunciation to the career of her brother:

> Jean-Baptiste! he too, rejected by Antony! It makes our friendship and fraternal sympathy closer. And still as he labours, not less sedulously than of old, and still so full of loyalty to his old master, in that *Watteau* chamber . . . So Jean-Baptiste's work, in its nearness to his, may stand, for the future, as the central interest of my life. I bury myself in that. (26)

She also buries herself in her own text. The "angry spasms" from which her journal supposedly delivers her disappear along with her self, or whatever the "central interest of my life" may be. Autobiography, then, instead of representing the authorial presence of its subject, here becomes the hole into which the subject is buried and disappears.

So Pater seeks to "bury" in the figure of Marie-Marguerite any interests that he perceives as undermining autobiographical authority. What appears to be infatuation becomes self-sacrifice. Whatever artistic desires she may have gotten from her constant contact with artists--her brother, her father, and Watteau--Pater assures us are impossible from one so "tame and unambitious." Only after every possible interest has been effectively "buried" can Marie-Marguerite emerge as the moral authority and judge, a position that she no doubt holds in the portrait. Thus, as a woman, she keeps afloat the paradox of the "natural" judge, one whose opinions are authorized by a naturalized gender, and untainted by participation in the public sphere.

And judge she does. Although her contact with Watteau is limited, she is his moral compass, the only one who seems to know the point at which his artistic indulgences become excesses. Watteau, for example, "fall[s] out *too hastily* with himself and what he produces" (7; emphasis added). His movement into the more privileged circles of the art world, she fears, may lead Watteau to self-destructive covetousness:

> The rudeness of his home has turned his feeling for even the simpler graces of life into a physical want, like hunger or thirst, which might come to greed; and methinks *he perhaps overvalues* these things. (7; emphasis added)

As Watteau's career accelerates, Marie-Marguerite's fears are fulfilled and signified by a similar, though strangely

endearing, lack of restraint: "And there is something noble--shall I say?--in his half-disdainful way of serving himself with what he still, as I think, *secretly values over-much*" (11; emphasis added).

Two forms of intuitive knowledge make possible these sorts of pronouncements: she knows the line or, as she puts it, the "golden mean," over which is too much; she also knows how Watteau "secretly" thinks. Marie-Marguerite, after all, detects and remarks from the very beginning Watteau's gradual betrayal of his humble roots, signified by his dismissal of Jean-Baptiste. This "natural," intuitive power, as we have seen, is completely immobilized by its public silence. These silent judgments, in other words, are useless ones because they are expressed in a text that is defined in direct opposition to the public voice. Toward the end of Watteau's life, the judgments become retrospective, marked by a resigned futility: "It would have been better for him--he would have enjoyed a purer more real happiness--had he remained here, obscure" (27). Such judgments are not reserved for Watteau alone. Her brother is also the focus of her gaze:

> [Jean-Baptiste] is greatly taken with Antony, clings to him *almost too attentively* . . . *He needs* the expansion of some generous sympathy or sentiment in *that close little soul* of his, as I have thought, *watching* sometimes how his small face and hands are moved in sleep. . . . Well! *that may save him perhaps* from developing a certain meanness of character *I have sometimes feared for him*. (12; emphases added)

She watches and fears, but never directly interacts with the other figures, whom, we have seen, she has the unique ability to help.

This powerlessness is a function of the kind of autobiographical authority that Pater employs in this portrait. As we see from her metacommentary, her journal is free from public scrutiny, and thus from public interest; it is a *found* autobiography. This text, established in several ways as a disinterested one, is thus a kind of "pure" source--a text whose historical specificity and freedom from the kinds of political machinations that go into anything that announces itself as public makes it a text that we can "trust." For this reason, an overtly biographical approach would be out of the question for this portrait. Whatever biography exists here is, so we are to believe, is unwitting, accidental, and available only from this specific kind of autobiography.

Obviously, however, this "pure" and "found" autobiography is a severely edited one. The only extracts from the journal are the ones in which Watteau and Jean-Baptiste are implicated. Whatever may exist within these gaps of chronology--such as those Watteau passages that did not make the cut--we will never know. Nor will we know about the other aspects of her life aside from worrying about these two men. Since anywhere from one month to

several years separates these entries, there is much space in her life that is unfilled by her text.

Less obvious are the editorial gaps that are indicated by extant text, such as the "angry spasms" that are nowhere to be found. Perhaps more curious are the two times that she refers to a "portrait" that Watteau begins, but never finishes, the first time in 1714:

> My own portrait remains unfinished at his sudden departure. I sat for it in a walking-dress, made under his direction . . . giving me "a certain air of piquancy" which pleases him, but is far enough from my true self. (24)

The second occurs three years later:

> My own poor likeness, begun so long ago, still remains unfinished on the easel, at his departure from Valenciennes--perhaps for ever. . . . It is pleasanter for him to sketch and plan than to paint and finish; and he is often out of humour with himself because he cannot project into a picture the life and spirit of his first thought with the *crayon*. (35)

The edited portrait that we read also remains "unfinished" and, like Watteau's portrait of her, though it is "far enough from her true self," it remains all we have--a complete and edited portrait.

Pater's portrait is, of course, fictionalized autobiography, and as such, whatever text we have before us is it; there is not an edited text elsewhere that can be read in the sense that we can read "The Prince of Court Painters." A text, however, need not have existed to be edited. "To edit," in the sense of cutting text that was at one time present, not only implies that there exists

somewhere an ideal and complete portrait, but is reminiscent of the kind of Victorian biography where the sheer accumulation of details supposedly leads to a "more complete" reconstruction of the past. Pater turns this idea on its head; it is, after all, "pleasanter for him to sketch and plan than to paint and finish" (35).

The portrait is, by its very conception, a text defined by gaps, and the "extracts" that remain are a rickety framework indeed. The dates that head each entry seem almost arbitrary--a more or less dependable clock that vaguely corresponds to the dates in Watteau's chronology. What, for instance, "happens" between August 1705, when Watteau returns to Paris, and January 1709, when he competes for the *Prix de Rome*? Why also does an entire month divide the end of this entry and the beginning of the next one?:

> [July 1717]
> There, is my simple notion, wholly womanly perhaps, but which I may hold by, of the purpose of the arts.
> August 1717
> And yet! (to read my mind, my experience, in somewhat different terms) methinks Antony Watteau reproduces that gallant world . . . (33)

Are these edited or contiguous entries? The gap between the end of the first entry and the "And yet!"--a pause for which Paterian essay might not even devote a paragraph break--indicates a stronger reversal than the text divulges.

As we seen before in Marie-Marguerite's prescience concerning the French Revolution, the position of "facts" is

nearly as arbitrary in this autobiography as the dates. Eugene J. Brzenk, who calls this portrait the only one of Pater's that is "based completely upon historical personalities," says that

> it is Walter Pater's own 'tact of omission,' a phrase which he used for the first time in this sketch, that makes 'A Prince of Court Painters,' historically accurate though it is, more than a collective of biographical facts. (11-2)

What make this "more than," in Brzenk's estimation, is what is missing. Pater's "tact of omission" does not threaten the portrait's status as "historically accurate." Although I am sure that a meticulously "antiquarian" comparison of the "facts" in this portrait with contemporary documents would reveal more than a few Paterian liberties, the "truth" of the portrait is of little concern here. Pater himself admits, after all, to one historically inaccurate fact in a note in the second edition of Imaginary Portraits, when Marie-Marguerite refers to a book that had "been a favourite with large numbers in Paris" but which, Pater tells us, was "[p]ossibly written at this date, but almost certainly not printed till many years later" (37).

Rather than reconciling different versions of events or reducing the discourse of (auto)biography to what is supposed to be "historically accurate," Pater is more concerned with situating personalities constructed from readings that are historically specific. It would be dismissive and highly problematic to see this disdain for

the exactitude of "accurate" historiography as mere laziness. In the Victorian arena, where biographical production entailed exhaustive masses of seemingly unedited detail, Pater positions his mode of "biography" as a discourse where texts must be *read*, and edited, and where the reader often becomes the primary concern--a discourse within which biography becomes autobiography, and autobiography becomes fiction.

Notes

1. For Eliot, of course, Pater's "ethics" are essentially escapist. Nonetheless, as Jonathan Loesberg persuasively argues, it is "Eliot, not Pater, [who] implicitly contends for a prophylactic separation of art from other forms of experience. He connects this separation with the dictum that one should attend to art only for the sake of other forms of knowledge or experience from which it had first been separated" (11).

2. Harold Bloom describes these kinds of Modernist attacks as the anxiety of Paterian influence:

> To know Pater, and to apprehend his influence not only on Stevens and Yeats, but on Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and many other writers of our century, we need to place Pater in his Oedipal context in the cultural situation of his own time. (Walter Pater 3)

3. See Wright's 1907 Life of Walter Pater.

4. This tension between discourses of fiction and "fact" is a major point of discussion in the study of autobiography. Most are agreed that merely conflating the two is problematic. For an extended argument along these lines, see Eakin's Fictions in Autobiography, where he argues that conflating, in this case, autobiography and fiction "willfully ignor[es] the autobiographer's explicit posture *as autobiographer* in the text" (4). See also Philippe Lejeune's On Autobiography, and especially his Le pacte autobiographique.

5. In Rethinking Intellectual History, Dominick LaCapra sees this relationship between "bio" and "graph" in terms of two texts with different demands and strategies:

> [W]e are not merely comparing raw data with discursive or narrative representation--although this assumption may in one sense be a necessary heuristic fiction; we are also comparing signifying practices which pose the problem of mutual translatability and transformation. (185)

6. One of Pater's sources for this biographical framing of the historical may be Sainte-Beuve. For a more on the Pater/Sainte-Beuve connection see Inman, Pater' Reading; see also Conlon's Walter Pater and the French Tradition.

7. While attribution was not as codified in the nineteenth century as it is now, Billie Inman has identified a particularly disturbing instance in Pater's scholarship where his dependence on J.A. Overbeck in "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture" and in "The Marbles of Aegina" in Greek Studies is matched only by his neglect in fully citing him. See Inman's Walter Pater and His Reading (1990), (413-30).

8. This reading, by the way, also comes with its own genealogy of sources, the most obvious of which may be Swinburne's "Notes on Designs of the Old Masters in Florence" (1868), where he describes a drawing of a woman by Michelangelo:

> . . . her mouth crueller than a tiger's, colder than a snake's, and beautiful beyond a woman's. She is the deadlier Venus incarnate . . . for upon earth also many names might be found for her: Lamia transformed . . . . (320)

For a fuller listing, and for an idea of the extent of Pater's debt to others for his reading of *La Gioconda,* see Hill's "Critical and Explanatory Notes" to the The Renaissance (380).

9. In an 1875 review of The Renaissance, Sarah Wister accuses Pater of this subjective reading of Leonardo:

> In fine, had Mr. Pater been more occupied with his subject than himself, he would have given us, instead of *silhouettes* on cobwebs, a vivid, full-face portrait of Leonardo's personality, about which there is no mystery or secret . . . . (104-5)

10. This notion of mutually curiosity recalls Kant's concept, in Critique of Judgment, of "subjective universality." Whereas in Kant this "universality" depends on what we can "presuppose in every other person," in

Pater's formulation, we can only make assumptions about those who are curious.

11. Although one could argue, as Gerald Monsman most notably has in Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography (1980), for the prominence of autobiography's role in nearly all of Pater's works, "The Child in the House" (1878) is the work of Pater's most commonly identified as autobiographical. Both Wright's 1907 biography and Michael Levey's biographical study of Pater use "Child in the House" as a source. Monsman, on the other hand, approaches Pater and autobiography psychoanalytically and isolates the early deaths of both of Pater's parents as the pivotal event for his writing, which included

> a dreaded yet desired separation from parental dominance that left an indelible sense of guilt and remorse for having somehow caused or willed their deaths. Pater dealt with this guilt by a textual sublimation or displacement, exorcising his conflicting emotions through the act of autobiography. (4)

As attested to by Perry Meisel's book of the same year, The Absent Father, Pater's life and works are fertile ground for psychoanalysis. While there is much to be said for such an approach to Pater, that is not my emphasis here.

12. See Arthur Symons review of Imaginary Portraits.

13. See Levey 30, Wright I: 24, and Gosse 244.

14. For an excellent and well-documented account of this controversy, see Hill's notes (443-451).

19. According to Eugene J. Brzenk in his introduction to a collection of Imaginary Portraits, when Pater was asked if he was related to the Jean-Baptiste Pater, he replied "I think so; I believe so; I always say so" (11).

16. In Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography, Gerald Monsman projects what he see as Marie-Marguerite's and Jean-Baptiste's artistic frustration onto Pater himself:

> By projecting himself into both brother and sister, Pater can suggest simultaneously his frustration at being a mere belated imitator of original genius, like Jean-Baptiste, and also his impatience at being condemned to living without companionship of a high artistic order, like Marie-Marguerite. (70)

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT WAS THE NEW HISTORICISM?: WALTER PATER IN THE *FIN DE SIÈCLE*

Fin De Siècle Historicism

One of the distinguishing features of historicism is its persistent state of crisis. As we have seen in the Introduction and in the extended example of Pater, the history of historicism is not so much the dialectics of methodologies as it is a genealogy of a meta-historicist discourse. Pater's original title, Studies in the History of the Renaissance, was perhaps more accurate than the simple The Renaissance of later editions in describing the essays inside: a collection of musings on the peculiar historical problem of the Renaissance. The essays that sandwich the volume--"Two Early French Stories" and the one on Winckelmann (an eighteenth-century German)--strikingly raise the question of historical and cultural boundaries in previous descriptions of the Renaissance. Throughout his *oeuvre*, Pater voices similar skepticism towards the naive belief that one can simply write history uproblematically. He calls such beliefs "antiquarianism." Thus, Pater responds with what is the only remaining possibility for him: to make the problems of history themselves the stuff of

historical discourse.

It is the persistence of this crisis that troubles the assumption that Pater's work proceeds from a clearly defined set of *fin de siècle* anxieties and that the problems that he identifies and illustrates can be found in virtually every other writer of this period. To say that any period or country contains *the* crisis of historicism, as we have seen, ignores the fact that historicism not only exists, but is conceived, in crisis.

Nonetheless, as our own *fin de siècle* comes to pass, we find ourselves in yet another era defined by yet another crisis of historicism. To say that *all* temporal boundaries--such as the end of centuries, millenia, regimes, and so on--produce a similar collective anxiety towards the concept of history would, at the very least, be historically incorrect. How do we, therefore, account for a "new" historicism in a discourse that has never had a clearly definable "old" one? Although Stephen Greenblatt identifies the "positivist historical scholarship of the early twentieth century" as the *de facto* "old" historicism, others, including Greenblatt himself, have located it elsewhere ("Towards a Poetics of Culture" 1).[1] And it is the slipperiness of this invisible but completely necessary opposition, among other things, that makes it so difficult to place Pater--or, for that matter, Carlyle, Michelet, or Burckhardt--neatly in the "old" camp. Indeed, as we have seen in this as well as

other recent studies, Pater is quite useful to current critical theory and vice versa. Pater, too, is being brought into the "theoretical ferment of the past few years" that for Greenblatt distinguishes the New Historicism (1).

What Was The New Historicism?

It has become so much of a commonplace to say that there is nothing new about the New Historicism that one wonders if it ever existed in the first place. As the many critiques of and eponymous collections on the New Historicism have come forward, it is perhaps difficult not to think of this "movement" in terms of anything but a phantom that, once constructed in hard-to-resist terms of "newness," attracts and perpetuates the careers of everyone who come in contact with it. It is, in fact, the perfect project: regardless of what side you come down on, everyone benefits. This self-perpetuation is evidenced by the fact that most of these so-called New Historicist studies, in the words of Stanley Fish, "are not doing New Historicism, but talking about doing New Historicism" (303). Short of a writer identifying him or herself as a "new historicist," it is, indeed, a troublesome task to detect studies that actually "do" New Historicism.

At this point in the New Historicist proceedings, however, the distinction upon which Fish's statement is based may no longer be a valid one. Regardless of whether or not the New Historicism began as a methodology, what it

has now become is a movement whose chief subject is itself. Like journalists who, when the media becomes the news, interview each other, the New Historicism has largely become the ultimate "insider's" game.

Such a phenomenon may just be the nature of our profession, as Paul DeMan points out in The Resistance to Theory:

> In a manner that is more acute for theoreticians of literature than for theoreticians of the natural or the social world, it can be said that they do not quite know what it is that they are talking about, . . . that, whenever one is supposed to speak of literature, one speaks of anything under the sun (including, of course, oneself) except literature. The need for determination thus becomes all the stronger as a way to safeguard a discipline which constantly threatens to degenerate into gossip, trivia or self-obsession. (29)

The problem, DeMan implies, is that we avoid "doing" because it is impossible to "do"; in the absence of this action, all discourse necessarily becomes meta-discourse. In fact, in his appropriately titled essay "The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics," Brook Thomas sees in this meta-discourse an avoiding of the inevitable failure of the New Historicism to produce anything that does not repeat old models:

> On the one hand, [New Historicists] claim authority for their reconstructions of literary history by appealing to historical evidence. On the other, they have to admit that their evidence is itself an inevitably partial construction of the past from a present perspective. (187)

More specifically, these "reconstructions," despite their attempts to hamstring the notion of history as progress, reproduce what he calls "teleological narratives of progressive emergence"--something he contends Rankean *historismus* also reverted to, despite similar claims to the contrary.

Given this tension between "old" and "new" historicism, it is significant that the quote most closely identified with the New Historicism is Stephen Greenblatt's claim, "I began with the desire to speak with the dead" (Shakespearean Negotiations 1).[2] It is, for instance, the first sentence in H. Aram Veeser introductory essay to The New Historicism, just as it is in Greenblatt's Shakespearean Negotiations. In both places, it is there ostensibly to serve the same function: to undermine our expectations as to what constitutes a postmodern historical inquiry. The implication is that, in the wake of deconstruction, we are so jaded that we are supposed to recoil at such romantic candor. While this tactic may work in Greenblatt's first use of it, like all surprises, it wears with continuous use, and finally we are left wondering as to why it has become so important.

Why it is so important, as it turns out, is exactly the kind of question we need to ask of those aligned with the New Historicism. For Veeser, Greenblatt's quote is "[p]ersonal, even autobiographical," and it

> challenges the norm of disembodied objectivity to which humanists have increasingly aspired. Far from invisible, this writer's desires and interests openly preside: the investigative project proceeds from an unabashed passion. (ix)

Besides the fact that the subjective historicism of, say, a Burckhardt, Michelet, Carlyle, or Pater hardly represents the quest for "objectivity" that he sees in humanism, Veeser seems to miss Greenblatt's rhetorical point. If for Veeser the voicing of this desire signifies the advent of a personal historicism after all these years, Greenblatt confesses his desire in order to deconstruct it. While he does not "abandon this dream" of speaking to the dead by the end of his discussion, the desire has nonetheless been problematized:

> [T]he mistake was to imagine that I would hear a single voice, the voice of the other. If I wanted to hear one, I had to hear the many voices of the dead. And if I wanted to hear the voice of the other, I had to hear my own voice. The speech of the dead, like my own speech, is not private property. (SN 20)

What is also curious about Veeser's reading of the quote is his interesting use of the phrase "disembodied objectivity." In Veeser's formulation--and, I would suspect, in many others--the flipside of this phrase supposedly describes the New Historicism: a "re-embodied subjectivity." In Foucault's lifelong examination of the body in history, many "New Historicists" have indeed "rediscovered"--we might even say "exhumed"--the body as a site for historical inquiry. As his infamous extended quotation of the death of Damiens

the regicide attests, Foucault also depends, as in Greenblatt's quote, on a "personal" reaction to uses of the body that graphically and historically divide us.

I use the word "exhume" to emphasize that Foucault and his followers are located within a history of the body as a model of historicism. Foucault does not miraculously discover a body that is free from the markings of history or of the historian. Nonetheless, in the Introduction to The Making of the Modern Body (1987), Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur claim that scholars "have *only recently discovered* that the human body itself has a history" (emphasis added):

> Not only has it been perceived, interpreted, and represented differently in different epochs, but it has also been lived differently, brought into being within widely dissimilar material cultures, subjected to various technologies and means of control, and incorporated into different rhythms of production and consumption, pleasure and pain. (vii)

While the lexicon is decidedly Foucauldian, and in that respect "recent," the fact that the body as an artifact is culturally and historically determined would hardly have come as a surprise to many of the nineteenth-century contextual historians influenced by Vico and Hegel, especially Walter Pater and Jules Michelet, for whom the body explicitly serves this documentary purpose.

Perhaps an example will serve to illustrate the connection I am making here. Much has been written, and generated, from Foucault's three-page quotation of the

document that describes the torture and death of Damiens the regicide in Discipline and Punish--a description that demands not only a reaction, but a historically specific one. In addition to the many purposes this narrative serves, it also forces us to account for, and subsequently abandon, any notions of historical progress that we may be harboring. More interesting for Foucault than some humane or "progressive" moral judgment are the ways in which such uses of the body can be read within a "history of power relations and object relations" (24).[3]

As many others have pointed out, the rhetoric of employing the graphic, historically displacing anecdote has since been--like the repetition of Greenblatt's phrase--imitated *ad nauseam*.[4] Yet Foucault's technique in this instance is itself reminiscent of the rhetoric of "old historicism." An interesting comparison to this strategy, for instance, is Pater's discussion of torture in the second-century Rome of Marius the Epicurean, in which he calls torture the "novel-reading of that age":

> Scaevola might watch his own hand, consuming, crackling, in the fire, in the person of a culprit, willing to redeem his life by an act so delightful to the eyes, the very ears, of a curious public. If the part of Marsyas was called for, there was a criminal condemned to lose his skin. It might be almost edifying to study minutely the expression of his face, while the assistants corded and pegged him to the bench, cunningly; the servant of the law waiting by, who, after one short cut with his knife, would slip the man's leg from his skin, as neatly as if it were a stocking--a *finesse* in providing the due amount of

> suffering for wrong-doers only brought to its height in Nero's living bonfires. (168-9)

While these scenes transpire amid the claps of delighted spectators, Marcus Aurelius occupies the emperor's seat and, in a display of supreme disinterest, sits there

> impassibly through all the hours Marius himself had remained there. For the most part indeed, the emperor had actually averted his eyes from the show, reading, or writing on matters of public business, but had seemed, after all, indifferent. (169)

As in Foucault's account, the reactions of the ruler and of the spectators to the government-sanctioned torture are designed to shock us. As Pater warns us, however, such indignant reactions are ahistorical:

> That long chapter of the cruelty of the Roman public shows may, perhaps, leave with the children of the modern world a feeling of self-complacency. Yet it might seem well to ask ourselves--it is always well to do so, when we read of the slave-trade, for instance, or great religious persecutions on this side or that, or of anything else which raises in us the question, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?'--not merely, what germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like; but, even more practically, what thoughts, what sort of considerations, may be actually present to our own minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them: each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin--the touch-stone of an unfailing conscience in the select few. (170)

Such phrases as the casual "this side or that" in reference to religious persecutions that always seem to run their course and die away remind us that we always live in the midst of "legal crimes." In most cases, as Pater and

Foucault illustrate, the treatment of the body takes part in defining these "persecutions" and "crimes."

In addition to the rhetorical similarities between Pater's account and Foucault's, what intrigues me about this passage of Marius is the figure of Marcus Aurelius affecting his studied, almost ridiculous, indifference amidst what Pater titles this "Manly Amusement." This figure intrigues Marius also, and his reaction to Marcus Aurelius reflects a disgust with what he perceives to be an egregious political relativism:

> There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness; to set them on opposite sides, in some great conflict, of which that indifference was but a single presentment. . . . Surely Aurelius must be lacking in that decisive conscience at first sight . . . [Marius] at least, the humble follower of the bodily eye, was aware of a crisis in life, in this brief, obscure existence, a fierce opposition of real good and real evil around him. (170)

Much of Marius's reaction, "though his light had not failed him regarding it," turns out to be a kind of political naivete, an inability at this point in his life to understand that visceral reactions to complex phenomena are flawed and limited readings of the historical text. Such reactions are the expected, overconceived specific ones that hinder our examination of histories and cultures outside our own. Nonetheless, Pater realizes in this discussion of torture that such "flawed" readings are inevitable, that our

response to historical phenomena cannot be anything but historical. Indeed, Marius the Epicurean could be described as a novel wherein the protagonist finally learns that historical transcendence, as he had originally conceived it, is impossible.

I use this passage, and Marius' reaction, to note that writing Pater off as merely relativistic is inaccurate. More importantly, I use it to raise the question of relativism in relation to Foucault's treatment of the body. The question itself, however, is the first problem we must address here: calling any discourse relativistic tacitly assumes that such relativism is possible. That there exists a perspective from which one can read all others with equal regard is, after all, a position that, for whatever reason, *needs* to see all other positions as equal. Such an ideal of neutrality is far from apolitical, as is the notion of "disinterest." Marcus Aurelius' turn from the torture to the papers of state does not so much indicate a disinterested politics as it does a politics of disinterest. As Pater shows us, it is more important for Aurelius to affect "that old Stoic paradox of the *Imperceptibility of pain*" (169) than it is for him to react in a manner that would threaten this powerful pose of disinterest.[5]

In both Pater's and Foucault's accounts, their retreats from standard cultural judgments guarantees some kind of reaction that is inevitably political, and so they

themselves must be seen as political, wittingly or unwittingly. "Political" here does not necessarily mean conventionally "partisan," but to manipulate political reactions by adopting a position outside the expected positions is itself implicitly political. Marcus Aurelius' reaction notwithstanding, how is it even possible to adopt a position of relativism about the body? Such a thing would require that we leave the body; and if Christian asceticism, as well as Platonism, would require that we do just that, then this abandonment nonetheless must always take place in relation to a historical body and thus will be bound to a specific discourse of the body.

Torture is not self-defining. In fact, in The Genealogy of Morals, Friedrich Nietzsche argues that it was "crimes," such as the ones that Pater and Foucault describe, that produced such things as "morals" in the first place. After describing the Egyptian and Roman methods of extracting flesh for delinquent debts, he concludes that

> It was in *this* sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of "guilt," "conscience," "duty," "sacredness of duty" had its origin: its beginnings were, like the beginnings of everything great on earth, soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time. And might not one add that, fundamentally, this world has never lost a certain odor of blood and torture? (II: 5)

Similarly, Walter Benjamin asks us to remember that the "tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (257). In other words, the body and the disciplines

that mark it have never been "out of history" in the first place. Thus, any "new" discourse of the body in history is not so much a "re-discovery" as it is re-writing of the body into a history in which it already appears.

So popular has this "re-discovery" of the historical body become that there were no less than nine sessions on the body scheduled for the 1991 MLA Convention in San Francisco. While it is by no means my contention that this use of the body "originates" in the nineteenth century, I do argue that the documentary use of the body commonly associated with the New Historicism, and influenced most notably by Michel Foucault and Georges Bataille, appropriates previous models of the body, especially the nineteenth-century model of exhumation as historicism. Whether or not this appropriation is unwitting is not my concern. I am interested, however, in the ways in which the New Historicism re-enacts the same historical problems that such models of the body "unearth" in the nineteenth-century.

Such a association between New Historicist and nineteenth-century uses of the body requires that I define what I see to be at stake in this exhumatory model. As I have said, the body figures prominently in the work of Walter Pater and Jules Michelet. For Jules Michelet especially the similarity between burial and exhumation, on the one hand, and the progression of time and historical

reconstruction, on the other, is as overt as other models are inefficacious:

> May it be my part in the future, to have not attained, but marked the goal of history, to have called it a name that no else had. Thierry called it *narration*, and M. Guizot *analysis*. I have named it *resurrection*, and this name will remain. (Le Peuple xxxv)

Michelet's language is not merely figurative. He is drawn to bodies living and dead precisely because he delights in the body's ability to create the illusion of a commonality, a similarity that transcends any single body's life and death. His accounts of the (at least five) exhumations that he personally witnessed are marked by a desire at once to erase and maintain historical difference. At the site of his wife's exhumation there is both recognition and estrangement, relief and disappointment, when he discovers the decomposed condition of the corpse.

In this regard, Pater's use of the body bears a striking resemblance to Michelet's. As the bodies at the beginning of "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" are unearthed, it becomes apparent that the corpses are there for the same reason as they are in Michelet: to stir up questions of historical difference. In this case, however, Pater uses "German bone-science" to problematize the historical difference that Michelet attempts through direct observation. Science establishes the bodies as human, and thus ties them biologically to those living villagers who view the corpses a century later. Pater then cleverly uses

this scientific "grounding" to dismantle it, as well as the assumption that similarity erases difference.

In "Denys l'Auxerrois," when Denys is torn to shreds, the account of Denys's torture is not as interesting as what the narrator concludes about it. Even after he acknowledges that the heart of Denys "must long since have mouldered into dust," the narrator nonetheless confesses that, to him,

> Denys seemed to have been a real resident at Auxerre. On days of a certain atmosphere, when the trace of the Middle Age comes out, like old marks in the stones in rainy weather, I seemed actually to have seen the tortured figure there--to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets. (77)

This imagined exhumation is all the more interesting because the narrator never actually encounters the mythic Denys. The tale he tells comes from what he has reconstructed from the stained glass and tapestry representations of Denys.

What interests me about Pater's reconstructions of the body and those of Michelet are the ways in which this desire to "exhume" the body textually can be used to describe New Historicism uses of the body. What makes the New Historicism distinctive, in other words, is that it "unearths" the textual image that had been implicit in the nineteenth-century image of exhumation. In the Foucauldian return to the grisly, displacing document of the body we can see the figure of Michelet bending over the open grave. Such uses also inevitably reproduce many of the same anxieties that accompany such uses of the body: historical

difference, as well as textual and historical reconstruction and representation.

A recent article on "Beheadings" in the New Historicist organ Representations, for example, contains numerous depictions of decapitations (mostly of Louis Capet) before, during, and after. The "after" engravings are the ones that interest me most. In each, the late Louis the XVI either looks, acts, or is distressingly alive. In one engraving, his trunkless head spouts an endless trail of prophecy against his executors (29). In another, he is received--head-in-hand--into hell "by a Great Number of Previously Crowned Bandits" (36). What the author of this article, Regina Janes, has done here is "exhume" (the *Bibliothèque nationale* catalogue number is dutifully listed beside the title of each engraving) representations of exhumations. As Janes points out, the head of Louis is more powerful dead than alive--as are the bodies in Pater and Michelet. In this way, Janes and others involved in New Historicist practice imitate the very act they propose to represent. By flushing long-buried texts to the surface--especially ones that express the familiar nineteenth-century concerns with death, burial, exhumation, and resurrection--one is engaged in the same kinds of concerns.

This is all not to say that the New Historicism ignores the nineteenth-century obsession with the body. On the contrary, it is precisely the New Historicism's turn, in

recent years, from the Renaissance to the fertile fields of the Victorian age that occasions their interest as well as mine in nineteenth-century uses of the body. Indeed, it is said that "representations and routines of the body were transformed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" and that these "transformation were linked to the emergence of modern social organizations" (Gallagher and Lacqueur vii). Representing this "link" and "transformation," as we have seen, requires the uncovering and re-presentation of countless contemporary documents. While New Historicist practitioners take pains to exhume these documents historically, however, the New Historicist enterprise that situates them rarely receives the same scrutiny. Whereas Pater uses the corpses in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" to take his own assumptions to task, and Michelet uses the sight of his wife's corpse to create new ones, New Historicist uses of the body unearth and reconstruct without adequately refiguring their own position.

Again, this is not to say that New Historicists totally ignore this problem. Early on, Stephen Greenblatt realized that "cultural poetics" needs to be "conscious of its status as interpretation" and that this

> consciousness must extend to an acceptance of the impossibility of fully reconstructing and reentering the culture of the sixteenth century, of leaving behind one's own situation: it is everywhere evident in this book that the questions I ask of my material and indeed the very nature of this material are shaped by the questions I ask of myself. (Renaissance Self-fashioning 5)

The problem is, indeed, a familiar one, as H. Aram Veeser includes it in his list of the five assumptions of the New Historicism: "a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe" (xi). As in Brook Thomas's "teleological narratives of progressive emergence," New Historicist accounts and metacommentary, despite professions of self-consciousness, set themselves a task that cannot be executed. The predictable argument that this criticism misses the point--that the whole point of the New Historicism is that we can never achieve a position "outside" "the economy" in which we participate--would be difficult to support. It is the nebulousness and convenience of this self-consciousness that is the problem here, not the existence of some Archimedean point outside the play of history.

My concern here is not whether or not the New Historicism follows Greenblatt's dictum, or even that Pater or Michelet managed to realize something they did not. It is more important instead to examine the extent to which the unearth-and-reveal approach to supposedly self-evidently meaningful historical texts occludes, or prevents the acknowledgment of, other approaches and models. What was, and still is, novel about the New Historicism is that it not only allows but demands what had previously been guarded, marginalized, or "irrelevant" texts to enter into

intellectual discourse.[6] As it happens, however, these texts form the fabric of an approach that paradoxically excludes at the same time that it professes to embrace. At this point, then, the question becomes: in privileging the textual image, what other images or implications does the New Historicism overlook?

Pater, The New Historicism, and the Imaginary Portrait

Pater's work, like the work of New Historicism, was intended for an academic audience. Thus, we have Pater's essays and reviews, reprinted from such journals as the Westminster Review and The Guardian, that speak in the appropriate form and diction to an educated, nineteenth-century audience. In the course of these essays and reviews, Pater addresses his concerns--such as those of historical writing--in a relatively brief compass, oftentimes restricted by the form and diction that signifies these essays as academic. The discourses that comprise the New Historicism are addressed to an even more specialized audience, and even more so than in Pater's essays, these discourses, as well as the many critiques they have generated, are rendered in a format that is highly coded and structured.

Perhaps realizing these problems and the unnecessary restrictions they imposed on historical discourse, Pater headed off fairly early in his academic career to the more fruitful fields of the Imaginary Portrait. On an obvious

level, the Imaginary Portrait meant that Pater was unbound by rigid definitions of fact, diction, or format. More crucially, this new form meant that Pater could act out the same historical problems that he could only identify in the essays. Among these, as we have seen, was the problem of biography and autobiography in "The Child in the House"; the value and poverty of subjectivity in Marius the Epicurean; gender and historical representation in "The Prince of Court Painters"; problems of historical anachronism and reconciliation in "Duke Carl of Rosenmold" and "Denys l'Auxerrois," and so on.

Having a figure that personified these historical problems did not prevent Pater from speaking meta-historically. On the contrary, the milieu and figure of the Portrait represented two sides of a dialogue wherein history and meta-history, practice and theory, enacted a discourse that established new rules for such discussions. This is why it is problematic to include the Portraits and Marius the Epicurean in standard definitions of nineteenth-century fiction. Addressed to academic audience, meta-history is foregrounded in Pater's Portraits; hence, the "criticism" that even Pater's "fiction" is essayistic.

Despite the fact that the New Historicism has exploded the notion of what may be considered acceptable source material, these potentially invigorating sources remain locked inside the rigid form of the academic essay.

Foucault seems to realize the problem with such rigidity in dealing with unorthodox sources: his solution for the Damiens source in Discipline and Punish is to quote it uninterrupted for three pages. Although I do not propose that New Historicism practictioners "exhume" the form of the Imaginary Portrait, there is ample room for expansion in locating forms that adequately represent the eclectic sources upon which these practioners draw.

Like Pater, others--such as Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, and especially Roland Barthes--have created, to powerful effect, alternative forms to the academic essay. It is in the tradition of Pater that I see the work of such contemporary figures. That the Imaginary Portrait can be called at once essay and fiction, biography and autobiography, testifies to its usefulness in discussing the manifolds problems of history that have never confined themselves to one voice.

Notes

1. For Brook Thomas, the old historicism is the Rankean *historismus* of history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (189); for Frank Lentricchia, it is exemplified in Hippolyte Taine (Ariel 86-7); for Greenblatt himself, in Renaissance Self-fashioning, it is Burckhardt and his conception of the autonomous individual (1; 46; 161-2); other putative old historicists--such as Comte, Mill, and Tillyard--abound.

2. All subsequent references to this text will be cited as SN.

3. Translated by Alan Sheridan.

4. This criticism of New Historicism is a familiar one. See Terry Eagleton, Ideology of the Aesthetic (7), David Norbrook, "Life and Death of Renaissance Man" (104) for mentions of this New Historicist tendency. For more detailed critiques, see Frank Lentricchia, Ariel and the Police (29-102), and Carolyn Porter, "History and Literature: 'After the New Historicism'." The target of such critiques is, more often than not, Greenblatt himself, who repeats often this use of the "exhumed" anecdote. See, for instance, Chapter Two of Renaissance Self Fashioning; see also Shakespearean Negotiations. Other imitations of this are too numerous to mention here, but Regina Janes' article, "Beheadings," in Representations is an interesting recent example of the pictorial anecdote.

5. On the issue of pain and the subject see, Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain, where she discusses how "pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed" (4). In this way, the argument over Foucault's response to the body, as well as Pater's Marcus Aurelius', is as "reconciled" as it can ever be: "Thus, when one speaks about 'one's own physical pain' and about 'another person's physical pain,' one might almost appear to be speaking about two wholly distinct orders of events" (4).

6. According to Carolyn Porter, however, this inclusion has become in New Historicist practice takes these "marginal" texts "as always already subordinated, dominated, othered"--thus repeating the same old Formalist procedures and "retextualiz[ing] the extraliterary as literary" ("After the New Historicism" 260-1).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christopher Ballard Coates was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 5, 1963. The first nineteen years of his life were divided between Louisville, Kentucky, where he used to listen to Cincinnati Reds baseball games on the radio, and Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he attended grades 6-12. In 1986, he received his Bachelor of Arts degrees in English and history from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Two years later he received his Masters of Arts in English from the same school. In August of 1992, he received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Florida. He spends his time writing music and poetry, painting, and waiting with his wife Mary for their first son to show up some time in September of 1992. He has published both poetry and essays and his music has appeared in numerous video productions.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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